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MARTIN THE

WEAVER



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MARTIN THE WEAVER.

Frontispiece.



Martin the Weaver;

OR,

THE POWER OF GOLD.

FROM THE FRENCH BY

MRS. CAMPBELL OVEREND.

'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.'—Ps. LXII. 10.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM OLIPHANT & CO.

1870.

250. of 39.

' Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with food convenient for me:
Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord?
Or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.'

PROV. xxx. 8, 9.

' Gold! gold! gold! gold!
Hard to get, and light to hold;
Price of many a crime untold;
Good or bad a thousandfold!
How widely its agencies vary—
To save—to ruin—to curse—to bless—
As even its minted coins express!
Now stamped with the image of good Queen Bess,
And now of a bloody Mary.'—

HOOD.



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CHAPTER I.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF POVERTY.

'Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.'—
MARK xiv. 38.

LANGENAU is a little village in Silesia. It consists but of poor houses, the inhabitants of which are entirely occupied in weaving linen. The cottages which are scattered on the slope of the mountain, and in the valley, are in general surrounded by small gardens, if this name may be given to an ill-cultivated piece of ground in which may be seen potatoes and a few cabbages. There are no flowers, except here and there a common rose-tree, or a few plants of pinks or violets, which grow without any particular care, put there, perhaps, by the hand of a child, but which have never received any care from more skilful hands, that are more usefully occupied. Winter and summer, from morning to evening, the poor people

are seated before their looms. Scarcely have they time to prepare their meagre repast, how should they find time to cultivate flowers? They cannot eat flowers, and they have enough to do to procure their daily food. They are glad when they can have a few vegetables every day on their table besides their black bread; and in order to do this, they must give up the luxury of flowers.

In this village there lived, a few years ago, a weaver named Martin, an honest and industrious man. His cottage was situated at the extremity of the village, about two hundred yards distant from the road leading to the neighbouring town. It was built on the slope of a hill, the top of which was crowned with a forest of oaks, extending from hill to hill, so as to encircle the valley, and stretching right and left to an extent of several miles. The lower branches of the nearest trees sheltered the roof of Martin's little cottage in summer from the burning rays of the sun, and in winter from the thick snow which often covered this lonely valley to a thickness of several feet.

Martin the weaver was neither more nor less prosperous than his neighbours in the valley. By his steady and continued work he was able to support himself and his family, which consisted of his wife and an only son. Walter—for this was his name—was twelve years old, and he had always had

enough bread or potatoes; and even more than once on Sundays he had seen a nice bit of meat added to the meagre family dinner, which on such occasions the mother placed on the table with an air of triumph. These poor people were happy and contented, and thanked God that their condition was no worse. Their heavenly Father gave them food and clothing, and they desired nothing more.

But how rare it is that any human being should pass through this world without having known trouble of some kind! To the fine day of spring and summer succeed the tempests of autumn and the cold of winter. The life of man is, like nature, the scene of perpetual changes; the hour of sadness succeeds to that of joy, and dark storms to serene weather. Margaret, the good and honest wife of Martin, was seized with illness. She had caught cold, and did not take sufficient care of herself. In consequence, she became so seriously ill that she could not leave her bed. What a painful change there was in Martin's cottage! It is certainly a sad and sorrowful thing when sickness enters the dwelling of the rich, seizing on a cherished member of the family, and laying him on a bed of suffering; but how much greater is the affliction when sickness enters the cottage of the poor! The rich has all he can desire—cares and service, nursing and medicines, and an attentive and experienced doctor.

At all times he finds ready hands to give him tender care, to prepare for him a soft bed, to bathe his burning brow, to present to him strengthening and wholesome nourishment. Night and day he is surrounded by relations anxious to attend to his slightest wish, almost before he has time to express it. He is watched with the most anxious attention and care, which, if it cannot relieve his sufferings entirely, at least alleviates them.

How different it is in the cottage of the poor! Doubtless affection and tenderness are there also; but alas! there are no means to procure the necessary aid, and all the many things that might relieve and soothe the patient.

Martin loved his wife, and would have gladly devoted all his time to take care of her. He would have wished to be able to remain with her to soothe her sufferings so far as he was able; but how could he do so? Was he not obliged to be seated before his loom from the dawn of day to the evening in order to earn daily bread for his family? And in the night had he not to do the work of his household, for which his sick wife was now unable? His strength became gradually exhausted, for he had little more than two hours' sleep each night before beginning the hard work of the following day. He often sat down by the bedside of the invalid to speak words of comfort to her. He made

every effort to overcome his exhaustion and fatigue; but his eyes closed in spite of him, weariness overcame him, and he slept.

Martin was very anxious to get a good doctor for his dear patient; but where was he to find money to pay him? It was not till his wife had been long ill, until, gradually getting worse, she was quite confined to bed, that at length he went to the town to call a doctor. But he did it with a heavy weight on his heart, for he knew not how he was to discharge the debt which he was about to contract. The doctor came; his face clouded when he saw the patient. He wrote a prescription, which he desired Martin to take to a druggist. This was another new debt which must be paid. Poor Martin was certainly in a melancholy condition. In vain did he double his diligence to meet these increased expenses by working harder. He was unable for the task. He was obliged to have recourse to another means, and to sell one after another the articles of his furniture,—chairs, table, drawers, clothing, beds, everything, even things most indispensable. Truly it cost Martin much to give away things so precious to him, as they were part of the family inheritance which had come down to him from his father and grandfather, but he had no other means of procuring relief for his poor wife. Notwithstanding all his care, she still continued

very ill, and the doctor looked grave when Martin asked him if there was any hope of her recovery.

'To tell you the truth,' replied the doctor, 'she would require care and nourishment which would cause great expense.'

This answer almost overwhelmed the poor weaver. Care, good nourishment, money! Where should he get them? Ah! if he were but rich like the wealthy manufacturer Volmar, to whom he carried every Saturday the linen that he had woven during the week! But what could be done by a poor weaver like him, who possessed nothing in the world but his cottage and his loom?

Amid such cares and anxieties autumn had passed away and winter had come, and with winter the troubles of the poor family had increased, and weighed more heavily upon Martin's mind, like the heavy snowdrifts which, in the mountain and in the valley, were bending down the branches of the oaks to the earth. Martin, in perplexity and anguish, knew not where to turn. He had spent his last penny, and sold at a low price the last piece of furniture they could spare.

One day, in a cold morning in January, he rose from the miserable straw on which he slept. He opened the shutter to let the light of the grey morning into the desolate room, and called Walter, who had risen an hour before. Walter did not

answer. After he rose, he had lighted the stove, and immediately afterwards he had gone to the forest to gather sticks for their little provision of wood, which was almost exhausted. At the end of half an hour he entered the house bending under the weight of the faggot which he was carrying, and which he placed in a corner. He then put some wood in the stove, and appeared before his father with a bright eye and rosy cheeks.

‘Good morning, father,’ said he in a low voice, in order not to awake his mother, who was sleeping in a recess of the room. ‘It is very cold to-day; the snow was crackling under my feet.’

‘Poor boy,’ replied his father, ‘you must have been very cold going out so early with that thin linen blouse. You might have put on my jacket over it.’

‘Cold, father, do you say?’ replied Walter gaily; ‘perhaps I felt it a little at first, but I climbed the mountain bravely, and before I had picked up many dead branches I was quite warm. Cold does not do me much harm. Have I not always been accustomed to run barefooted in the snow?’

Martin sighed. He was touched with the contentment of his dear boy, who never complained of the hardest privations of poverty, and who always met him with a bright and happy face. Martin stroked his curly hair, and put his arm round him kindly.

‘May God bless you now and always!’ said he. ‘But if you are not cold, my boy, you must be hungry. You rose early, and you have worked well. Eat something now.’

He gave Walter a piece of bread, which the boy refused, for he knew that it was the last morsel there was in the house.

‘I am not very hungry yet,’ said he; ‘and when I go to school, the mistress is sure to give me something to eat, she is so kind, father. Keep the bread for yourself; you have more need of it than I have.’

The father took the bread and put it back in the cupboard, saying, ‘Well, you must eat it afterwards. You cannot go to school to-day; you must stay at home and take care of your mother. You will warm her soup when she needs it. There is enough for to-day, and God will provide for to-morrow.’

‘Do you wish me to stay at home, father?’ asked Walter, looking surprised; ‘and why?’

‘Because I must go to the town. I wish to speak to my employer,’ replied his father. ‘Painful as it is for me to do so, I am forced to ask an advance of money from Mr. Volmar. I have put off doing so as long as I could, because he is a hard and dis-obliging man. But I am pressed by necessity. I have sold all that it was possible to sell, and there is neither bread nor money in the house. I shall

try to soften his heart. May God incline him to grant my request !'

'He will do it, father; I am sure he will do it,' said Walter. 'Do not be uneasy, my mother shall want for nothing during your absence. 'Tis a very good idea to go to Mr. Volmar. He will certainly give you money when you tell him that in a few days you will take him a web. See, it will not be long before it is finished.'

'It will be ready the day after to-morrow if nothing disturbs me at my work,' said his father. 'I hope that Mr. Volmar will not refuse my request. I have worked for him many years, and I have never once asked for an advance. Remember to take good care of your mother, Walter.'

'Be easy, father,' replied Walter; 'I will take good care of my mother and everything in the house. I think I may also weave a little while you are away, that there may be no time lost.'

Martin knew well that he could trust his diligent boy, and without any further remark he took his stick in his hand to set out.

'May God keep you, Walter!' said he as they parted. 'Tell your mother that I shall return, if possible, before noon.'

'Yes, father, I will not forget. Good-bye, and may you succeed !'

Martin had scarcely left the house when he felt

that the piercing cold almost took away his breath, and made him tremble in his poor, thin garments, for he had no cloak. He walked as quick as he could to warm himself, and hastened on over the snow which was crackling under his feet. He succeeded in getting warmer; but it was more difficult for him to chase away the cares which were weighing on his heart and taking away his courage. If the rich manufacturer should reject his request, what would become of him? He would have no alternative but to die of hunger, or to apply for public charity. This thought overwhelmed him. Martin was an honest and industrious man, who had worked hard all his life, and who had always been able to earn bread for himself and his family. He could not bear the idea of being obliged to beg, but he trusted that God would not forsake him, as his misfortunes did not arise from any fault of his own. Mr. Volmar knew him to be an honest man, and Martin intended to ask only a small advance of a few crowns on the price of a web which was nearly finished, and for which he would then be paid nearly forty francs. His work would have been ready a week before, but for the illness of his wife; and this was a circumstance which he could not help.

After walking quickly for about two hours, Martin at length reached the town, and a few

moments afterwards he stood timidly before the large and handsome house where Mr. Volmar lived. He knocked, and asked to speak to him ; and he was shown into the counting-house, where he hoped to be able to present his petition at once. But he was obliged to wait till his turn came, for Mr. Volmar was very busy, and had many people to attend to before the poor weaver, who stood timidly hidden in a corner, waiting anxiously till Mr. Volmar should be ready to speak to him.

While he waited, he had time to observe the business that was done in the office of the rich manufacturer. People were continually coming and going, the door was scarcely shut for a moment, and the clerks and cashier had enough to do to attend to every one. Some came to receive money, others to pay it, and the latter were much the more numerous. In the large counting-house there was a continual clinking of silver and gold. On the desk there were piles of silver crowns and gold pieces, and by the side of the cashier there were bunches of notes of considerable value. The sight of so much wealth almost bewildered poor Martin, and raised in his mind evil thoughts which he earnestly desired to overcome. 'If I could but seize a single handful of this heap of riches,' thought he, 'I would be saved from poverty for a long time, perhaps for all my life.' But he put away

this covetous thought, and turning his eyes from the heaps of gold and silver, he fixed them on Mr. Volmar. The manufacturer was seated like a prince upon his old leathern arm-chair, receiving his different visitors with a countenance almost gracious, giving them an answer and dismissing them, sometimes in a friendly manner, sometimes with ill temper. All bent before the rich man, and even those whom he had abruptly dismissed retired sadly, but without the slightest appearance of anger or resentment, from the fear of irritating the rich manufacturer, on whom, perhaps, their fate depended.

‘It is the *power of gold* before which they are all bending,’ thought Martin. ‘If Mr. Volmar were to be ruined to-morrow, they would pay as little attention to him as they do to a poor man like me, who have been patiently waiting for more than an hour. How sad it is that a man is esteemed in this world not according to his virtues, but according to the amount of the property which he can call his own!’

Another quarter of an hour passed away, and Martin still stood in his corner without being noticed by any one. People carelessly passed and repassed him; but none spoke to him, no one invited him to go forward and speak to Mr. Volmar. At length the patience of Martin was worn out. He over-

came his timidity, and firmly advanced to where Mr. Volmar was sitting.

‘Dear sir, will you allow me to say one word?’ said he in a beseeching tone. ‘My poor wife is sick, and my work is waiting me in the house. Every hour that passes away is a heavy loss to me, and I have already lost three hours, partly here, partly on the road.’

Mr. Volmar looked at poor Martin and frowned.

‘Wait!’ said he harshly. ‘Do you not see that I have pressing business?’

Martin sighed, bit his lips, and was silent. He feared to show his resentment in words that might offend the manufacturer; but he stood still in the same place, and did not return to the corner where he had been so long forgotten. He leaned silently against the railing which separated the office of Mr. Volmar from the rest of the apartment, firmly resolved not to move until he had received an answer. Mr. Volmar knitted his brows every time that his eyes fell upon the poorly clothed weaver; but despair gave Martin courage, and he bore the irritated looks of the manufacturer with unalterable patience. The latter, who did not seem to possess much of the virtue, turned to Martin a few moments afterwards, and said to him, in a cold, dry tone,—

‘Well, what do you want, my friend? You see

there are still many people waiting for me with whom I have business.'

'Yes, sir, I see there are,' replied Martin; 'but among all these persons there is perhaps not one whose distress is equal to mine.'

He then explained his situation in a few words, and ended by asking for an advance of five crowns. He promised to work night and day, and to bring in two days at the latest the web of damask which he had almost finished.

'What folly and nonsense is this!' replied Mr. Volmar in a harsh tone. 'You ought to know that I never make an advance, and you might have spared yourself the trouble of coming here. The hours that you have lost would have been much better employed at your loom. Return home, and remember, once for all, that I make it a rule never to give an advance to my workmen. I will not encourage idleness. Go; not one word more! When you bring the work, you shall have the money; but before then you shall not have a farthing!'

After these harsh words, which wounded Martin to the heart, Mr. Volmar turned his back upon him. Martin stood for a moment almost stupefied. His face became pale, and his whole body trembled with mortification and anger. At length he recovered himself, cast a gloomy and threatening glance, first on the manufacturer, then on the heap of money



MARTIN THE WEAVER.

that was lying beside him, and, without taking leave of any one, he quitted the place where he had been so harshly treated. With his cap covering his brow, his head bent, and his eyes fixed on the ground, he left the town and walked towards his home. Sometimes he stopped for a moment, muttering a few words to himself, and not seeming to feel the icy wind which chilled his frame. The peasants who were going to the town spoke and nodded to him, but he did not heed them, and seemed to hear and see nothing. His gloomy thoughts were firmly fixed on the heaps of gold and silver which had dazzled his eyes in the manufacturer's counting-house, and he yielded without resistance to the terrible temptation which a short time before he had successfully overcome.

At length he reached his cottage. Walter ran joyfully to meet him and welcome him home; but Martin did not utter a word. He abruptly withdrew his hand from the boy's grasp, threw his cap on the window seat, and sat down in gloomy silence near his loom, on which he leaned his head.

He did not even ask how his wife was, and this was usually his first thought when he returned home, even after a few hours' absence. The expression of his face was so full of trouble and sadness that Walter, who was seated near him, feeling most anxious, did not venture to question him as to the

result of his journey. Alas! he saw only too clearly that his father's hopes had been disappointed. They both sat long without speaking. At last Walter, taking courage and leaning towards his father, said gently,—

‘What does it signify, father? God will come to our help,—He forsakes only those who do evil. The Lord helps all those who are in distress.’

‘Who told you, boy, that I wished to do evil?’ said Martin almost fiercely; and, rising abruptly, he walked about the room, continuing to speak with much agitation, but rather more gently. ‘O Lord Jesus,’ said he, ‘suffer me not to fall into temptation! Grant, O Lord, that I may continue honest, even if our trials should be tenfold greater.’

‘Father, father! what are you saying?’ exclaimed Walter anxiously. ‘I did not say that you wished to do evil. I know that you are incapable of it. Have you not always taught me that we ought to trust in God? Do not torment yourself in this way, dear father. Certainly God will not forsake us. My mother is much better to-day, and the doctor, who was here a little while ago, said that her illness had taken a favourable turn, and that he was now sure that she would soon recover. I thought you would be much delighted to hear this good news on your return, but you are quite sad and depressed. Come, dear father, if you have no

money, we must manage as well as we can for two days more. The clergyman has been here. He asked for you, and when he heard why you had gone to the town, he was very sorry, and said that you ought to have applied to him as your minister; that he knew you to be an honest man, and that he might have spared you a little money, which would have been much better for you than wasting your time and your trouble in going to the town. He afterwards sent a good bowl of soup for dinner, with some meat for you, as he thought you would have much need of it after your long walk. I was so glad to meet you, to tell you this good news; but you are so changed! Oh, father, can you not look cheerful again?’

Martin was much moved by his son’s gentle words. He sat down, drew Walter towards him, and pressed him tenderly to his heart. While he caressed him, his tears fell on the brown curly hair of his boy. Then he said, in a tone of deep feeling,—

‘Bless you, my dear boy, for the good you have done me! Continue firm in your trust in God. He will help you in your distress as He has helped me in the trying hour of temptation. And now come, let us go to your mother.’

They went together to the bedside of the invalid. She seemed really much better; her countenance

was calmer than it had been the evening before, and her eye clearer and more intelligent. A good night's sleep had visibly strengthened her, and she held out her hand to her husband with a smile. He took it and pressed it kindly.

'You are better to-day, Margaret, are you not?' said he.

'Yes, thanks be to God! I am much stronger than I was yesterday. Both the doctor and the clergyman have been to see me, and their visits have done me good. The doctor thinks that I may be able to be out of bed next week.'

'God grant that it may be so!' said Martin.

In the meantime Walter had been taking from the fire some soup that he had put on to warm for his father.

'Have you been to the town?' asked the invalid. 'Have you seen Mr. Volmar? I know what you were going to ask of him. I hope you have not had a useless journey.'

'Useless indeed!' replied Martin, while a dark cloud passed over his brow; 'but that does not signify now. Walter tells me that the clergyman has been here and has promised to help us. God be praised for His great mercy! Unless I had sought help from Him, I know not what might have happened,—the temptation was so strong.'

Frightened by his words, Margaret questioned

her husband ; and Martin confessed that for a time he had actually contemplated the crime of entering Mr. Volmar's counting-house by night and taking some of his money. All the way home he had been struggling against this terrible temptation, and had prayed to God to enable him to overcome it, and he had been helped to do so by Walter's words, ' God never forsakes any except those who do evil, and He helps the unfortunate in their distress.' He added that these words had been like a flash of lightning in his soul, and had awakened in him the most sincere repentance for his guilty distrust and his criminal designs.

' May God forgive me ! ' said he in conclusion. ' I almost deceived myself into believing that I might be justified in taking as much as the advance I had asked for on my work,—the temptation was so strong, and our misery so great ! '

' Yes, dear husband, may God forgive you ! ' said Margaret, taking his hand. ' Never forget that an unjust or wicked action, far from relieving misery, only makes affliction more severe and more difficult to bear. Yes, doubtless the Lord can deliver us from suffering ; but He will only do so if we keep our consciences pure and strive to observe His law. Blessed be His name, that He has not suffered you to be tempted above what you were able to bear ! '

Martin wished to reply, but at that moment

Walter came into the room and told his father that his dinner was ready. The presence of the boy prevented Martin speaking, but he showed by an expressive look, and a kind pressure of the hand, that he agreed with what his wife had said. The invalid understood him, and when Martin and Walter had left her, she joined her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven, she prayed thus: 'I thank Thee, O heavenly Father, for having preserved him from doing any sinful action! Help us to watch and pray that we may not enter into temptation, but may continue stedfast in our trust in Thee and in Thy great mercy. For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.'



CHAPTER II.

HELP IN TIME OF NEED.

'Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.'—PSALM cvi. 3.

AFTER a slight repast, Martin set to work, and soon the shuttle flew rapidly under his hand between the threads so skilfully arranged. The weaver seemed resolved, by diligence and increased activity, to make up for the time he had lost during the first part of the day. Walter went to the wood to gather sticks, for the faggot that he had brought in before was nearly finished. The weather was very cold, and it was necessary to keep up the fire for the sake of the invalid.

Lively and active, the young boy nimbly climbed the steep mountain, ran with a light step over the hardened snow which crackled under his feet, and tried to make the excessive cold more bearable by

he could also procure for his sick mother the comforts and remedies which her state of health required. The temptation caused by the '*power of gold*' was there; but Walter had too much uprightness and honesty for this to have the least effect on his mind. It never once occurred to him that he could keep the purse and its contents; he was wholly occupied with thinking who could have lost it in this remote place. It could not have been one of the woodcutters; for even if he had possessed so large a sum, he would not have had so valuable a purse. Suppose it might be the head forester? This was not likely either, for though he was a man in easy circumstances, it was not probable that he was carrying about so large a sum in the wood. Who then could it be? Perhaps a stranger staying with the forester who might have been hunting in the forest?

'The best way,' said Walter to himself, 'will be to go at once to the forester's house. The stranger may perhaps go away to-day, and it will be very inconvenient for him to go without his purse. In any case, the forester will tell me what to do with all this money.'

Walter did not resolve hastily on anything, but when he had once decided what it was right to do, he did it at once. He carried his bundle of sticks to the foot of the mountain, put it in safety at the

trunk of a tree where he might find it again on his return, and proceeded to the forester's house. It was situated at about a quarter of an hour's walk from where he was, at the farther end of the valley; but Walter took only ten minutes to get there, and was admitted to the forester's parlour quite flushed and out of breath. A gentleman was seated on a sofa, well dressed, but looking vexed and annoyed. 'Certainly this is the owner of the purse,' thought Walter, as he made a bow to the forester.

'Good evening, my boy,' said the latter kindly. 'What brings you here at this hour? You have run till you are quite out of breath. Come, sit down and tell me what you want.'

'I want nothing, sir,' replied Walter; 'but I should like you to tell me if this gentleman has lost anything to-day in the forest.'

'Yes, certainly,' said the gentleman; 'I lost my purse to-day when I was out hunting. Have you found it? If so, you shall be well rewarded if you bring it to me.'

'I think this may be it,' said Walter, smiling and holding out the purse to him. 'I found it in one of the forest paths, and I thought its owner might perhaps be here. Is this the purse which you lost?'

'It is indeed,' said the stranger, taking it in his hand. 'I do not know how it could have fallen out

of my pocket. You are a very honest boy. Here is a crown-piece for your trouble.'

Walter opened his eyes in amazement, looking first at the crown-piece, then at the stranger, then at the forester, as if to ask, 'Are you in earnest, or are you jesting with me? So much money for very little trouble!' And he did not even hold out his hand to take the crown-piece.

'Take it, Walter, take it,' said the forester, smiling. He had guessed the boy's thoughts. 'The gentleman gives it you with pleasure, and he can well spare it.'

'But it is too much!' exclaimed Walter. 'I have not earned all that. Certainly I ran very fast to get here, but'—

'You have been very honest and brought it back, my boy,' said the forester, interrupting him. 'I will give you, besides, a hare for your mother, and you may come next week for another. I think that it will be acceptable, will it not? Well, will you take the money?'

Walter held out his hand, and accepted, with pleasure that he did not try to conceal, the crown-piece from the gentleman, and the present of the forester.

'Thanks! oh, thanks!' said he. 'My father will be so glad, and my mother will be so much pleased with the hare! God bless you, kind

gentlemen! This is what I call a piece of very good fortune.'

The stranger looked kindly at the boy, evidently pleased and amused with his simplicity.

'Tell me your name,' said he.

'Walter Martin,' replied the boy. 'My father is a weaver. This gentleman knows us well.'

'Martin!' said the stranger, evidently much surprised. 'Do you know, my boy, if any relation of your father's left this country many years ago to seek his fortune abroad?'

'O yes,' replied Walter; 'my uncle William, my father's brother. My father often speaks of him.'

'This may turn out to be a very remarkable meeting,' said the stranger, as if speaking to himself. 'But no, it cannot be as I was inclined to think, for the Martin whom I knew was a native of Westphalia.'

'Well, sir,' said Walter, who had heard the stranger's words, 'my father comes from Westphalia. He left his own country sixteen or seventeen years ago to come here, at the request of Mr. Volmar, the rich manufacturer, who wished to establish in this country workshops for weaving damask. As my father was a very skilful workman, Mr. Volmar induced him to come, gave him a small cottage, and paid the expenses of his journey. My father came here with all that he possessed, and he

became the instructor of the other weavers. At first all went well, but after he had taught the others all that he knew, Mr. Volmar was no longer kind to him, and my father would have returned to Westphalia if he had had the means. I have often heard him speak of this to my mother. It was certainly rather shabby behaviour of Mr. Volmar to-day to refuse my father a small advance of money for his work, when we need it so much because of my mother's illness. But God will take care of us; and I begin already to see His merciful providence. This beautiful crown-piece and the hare will please my father very much.'

'Wait a moment,' said the stranger; 'you will not repent doing so. Are you quite sure that your father was born in Westphalia, and came from there?'

'Yes, I am quite certain of it,' said Walter. 'And if you would come to our cottage, you might see the place and the date of his birth written by my grandfather in our old Bible.'

'Well,' said the stranger, 'can you tell me the name of the place where your father was born?'

'Bredenbek,' said the boy.

'The very place—Bredenbek!' exclaimed the stranger. 'All will soon be cleared up now. But do you know what became of your uncle William?'

'No; and my father does not know either. The

last letter he received from him was dated from Bremen. In it he said that he was going to seek his fortune in the East Indies. This was between twenty and thirty years ago, and since then my father has heard nothing more of him.'

'That does not surprise me,' said the stranger. 'But now I will not detain you longer. Perhaps you may hear more from me by and by. I will call at your cottage to-morrow to see your father; and now good-night.'

Walter was so overjoyed that he scarcely perceived that night had come on when he left the forester's house. The crown-piece that he had in his pocket seemed to warm his heart. The forester had given him one of his finest hares, and had shaken hands with him kindly. Walter having thanked him, set off like a horse goaded by the spur. He took up his bundle of sticks where he had left it, and in ten minutes afterwards he reached home, bathed in perspiration, and quite out of breath, for he had had a heavy burden to carry, but with a glad heart and a face beaming with joy.

'See, father,' said he, his eyes sparkling with joy, and placing the crown-piece on the table. 'This is for you, and here is a hare for my mother. Have I not found something worth having in the forest to-day?'

He then related to his father in a few words how

he had received the crown-piece and the hare; and he did not forget to speak of the gentleman who had inquired so particularly about Martin, his brother William, and other circumstances connected with his family. His father was not a little surprised; but the welcome presents that Walter had brought prevented him from thinking much about the stranger and his questions, which he supposed had proceeded merely from curiosity. Great was indeed the joy of the poor family! Slight as was the reward that had been given to Walter for his honesty, they were most grateful for it. This small sum would suffice to keep them till the web was finished, and save them from the starvation with which they were threatened. This was a very great benefit,—a much greater blessing than the rich can imagine, who count their crown-pieces not by one or two, but by hundreds and thousands.

The happiness of Martin and his family was yet to be increased that evening. The clergyman called, as he had promised. He inquired as to the result of Martin's visit to the town; and when he heard of the harsh refusal the poor man had received from Mr. Volmar, he took a crown-piece out of his pocket and put it on the table. Martin, with thanks, declined to accept it, saying that they had received assistance from a stranger; but the clergyman refused to take it back.

‘Let it be used,’ said he, ‘to procure for your wife the strengthening food that she requires so much.’

Martin, with tears in his eyes, thanked him warmly for his kindness, and promised to use it as the clergyman desired.

While the minister was still speaking to Martin, the door opened, and a friend entered. It was Gonthier, the weaver’s nearest neighbour, also a weaver, nearly as poor as Martin. When he saw the minister, he stopped and wished to go away; but the clergyman would not permit this, and Gonthier was persuaded to remain and sit down with them. It was evident that he had something to say, but he was silent; and the minister, who was an acute observer, easily saw that it was on account of his presence.

‘Tell Martin anything that you have to say to him, Gonthier, without minding me. If you continue silent, you will oblige me to go away; for you must confess, my friend, that you have something particular to say to Martin.’

‘I will not deny it, sir, since you have guessed it,’ replied the worthy man. ‘I knew that my neighbour Martin went to the town this morning to speak to Mr. Volmar, and that he returned sad and disappointed. I thought that, as his poor wife is so ill, my neighbour might be short of money; and as

I have by chance a little money by me, I came to ask if he would like a small loan. That's all; and here are three crown-pieces, the half of what I received yesterday for a web. I can easily do without it for a fortnight, neighbour Martin; and if it is of any use to you, I will lend it to you with pleasure.' Saying these words, he laid the money on the table and pushed it towards Martin, who, deeply moved, held out his hand to his kind neighbour.

'Thanks, Gonthier,' said Martin, with a voice trembling with emotion,—'thanks from my very heart! You are a good neighbour, and I will never forget this proof of your friendship were I to live a hundred years. But take back your money, my friend. God, who never forsakes the poor who trust in Him, has helped us twice to-day,—first by means of our worthy minister, and then by a stranger, to whom Walter did a trifling service. Thanks, then, neighbour; and though I need not accept your kind offer, believe me I am not the less obliged to you. Thank you once more, with all my heart, my dear friend.'

Gonthier quickly took up the money, saying, 'There is no need for so many words, Martin. What is there extraordinary in my offer? A neighbour ought to help another when he can, that is a matter of course. Well, I shall be glad to be

able to help you another time; and if I am in trouble in my turn, I am sure that you will help me if it is in your power.'

'Of course, you may be sure of that,' said Martin; and after a short pause he thus continued: 'It is truly a wonderful thing! The rich man who has before him heaps of gold and silver covers it with both hands whenever he sees the face of a poor man; and the poor man comes of his own accord to the cottage of one still poorer than himself, to share his last penny with him! How it exasperates me still more against the rich manufacturer! I have worked for him for nearly twenty years faithfully and diligently; and now that for the first time I go to him, not to beg, but to request a small advance of the money that will be due to me for my work, he sends me away with scorn and contempt. Woe to the rich who are so ungrateful and hard-hearted!'

'No, no, neighbour, do not speak in this way,' said the worthy Gonthier, shaking his hand. 'You must not exaggerate: all rich men are not ungrateful and inhuman. Among them as well as among the poor there are good and bad; and I know by my own experience that many a rich man privately does many good actions, which are all unknown to the world. Doubtless the poor man is more naturally inclined to help the poor, because

he knows by his own experience how hard it is to lay his head on his pillow with a heart oppressed with bitter cares, and to awake again in the morning to the sense of his misery; and to live thus from day to day, scarcely knowing how to provide bread for his children. The rich man, my dear neighbour, knows nothing of all this. He has never experienced the bitter anguish of poverty; and as, on the other side, he is often importuned for help by the unworthy, one can understand that he may be sometimes more hard and indifferent to the sufferings of the poor than he would be if their distress were better known to him. I agree with you that Mr. Volmar ought not to forget that he was once poor himself, and that there was a time when he had to struggle against the cares of poverty; and that ought to make him do more for us poor weavers; but "*gold hardens the heart.*" This is an old truth that is always new. Therefore let us not judge the rich too severely; for which of us can be sure that he would not become hard-hearted himself if God were to give him a large fortune? *Gold hardens the heart*, neighbour; and, believe me, it needs a truly steady and Christian mind to resist its infernal power.'

'No,' said Martin, 'I can never believe that. If I were ever to be rich, which is not likely, you would see how I would share my riches with the

poor. Ah! certainly I could never forget the cruel distress in which I have been, and all that I have suffered! No, neighbour, I would never treat any one as Mr. Volmar has treated me; and I could never forget what it is to eat one's bread moistened with tears.'

'It is thus, neighbour, that every man speaks who is poor and wishes to become rich,' replied the experienced Gonthier; 'but I do not know what he might do if his wish were realized. I repeat once again, "*gold hardens the heart.*" I have seen other instances than that of Mr. Volmar. I say therefore to you, neighbour, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." And now good-night. I must go home and see what my wife and children are doing.'

'I will accompany you, Gonthier,' said the minister. 'You have spoken like a wise man, and I approve of every word you have spoken. Yes, good friend, riches have their dangers as well as poverty; and these are perhaps greater than you imagine. Our Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ has said that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." This refers to the rich who set their hearts upon their worldly possessions. God be praised! there are also rich people who have pious hearts and Christian feelings; and it is to one of these, under God's blessing, that I owe the pri-

vilege of being permitted to preach the gospel as a minister of Christ. This generous benefactor provided for my support, sent me to school and to the university, and guided and sustained me by his kind hand till I was able to earn my bread by my own efforts. And he did all this from a principle of Christian love, without asking or even expecting any return for all the benefits he had bestowed! There are many such rich people, good Martin; and you must not forget this at the time when you have just suffered from the arrogance of one who knows no greater good than his well-filled money chest, and who harshly refuses the petitions of the poor. Believe me, my friend, such a man is more to be pitied than envied. It is not wealth which makes a man happy. The truly happy man is he who is humble and pious, and who has the peace of God in his heart. Riches cannot give this peace. It is the Saviour alone who can give it, as He said to His disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." The rich may possess this peace, but it is perhaps most frequently found among those who are leading a humble, quiet, and industrious life. Good-night, Martin; think well of all this, and may God bless you and yours!'

The clergyman and Gonthier went away together, and Martin lighted them to the door. When he

returned, he sat down in silence and reflected on what he had heard. 'For all that,' said he, tossing his head, 'I am sure that Gonthier is wrong. If I were to become rich, I am certain I should behave very differently from Mr. Volmar.'



CHAPTER III.

AN UNEXPECTED FORTUNE.

‘The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up.’—1 SAM. ii. 7.

THE following morning Martin had worked diligently for many hours, and he had made considerable progress with his web of damask when Walter returned from school, closely followed by a stranger, whom he did not see till he was near the door. When the boy perceived him, his eyes sparkled with joy, and he hastened to tell his father that it was the gentleman who had made him so handsome a present the evening before. Martin rose, welcomed the stranger, thanked him for the kindness he had shown to his son, and hastened to ask him to come in and to offer him a chair.

‘Will you take a seat, sir?’ said he; ‘and if I can be of any use to you, I am at your service, though we are only poor people, and can do but little.’

'I am much obliged to you, Mr. Martin,' replied the stranger. 'I am come to see you on most particular business, and I should like to ask you a few questions. Do not be alarmed, for I think it will be for your interest to answer them. You have, or rather you had, a brother?'

'Yes, sir, you have truly said, *I had*. Poor William! It is many years since I have heard of him. I scarcely expect to hear of him again.'

'Well, his name, then, was William? Where and when was he born?'

'At Bredenbek in Westphalia. I have still his certificate of baptism amongst some old papers.'

'Will you be so kind as to show it to me, Mr. Martin, if it does not give you too much trouble?'

'Certainly, sir,' replied Martin; and he took from a little closet a bundle of yellow dusty papers, carefully tied up. He opened it, looked over the papers, and soon handed to the stranger the certificate he wished to see.

'It is all right,' said the latter, after having read the paper and folded it up. 'Do you know in what year your brother quitted Westphalia?'

'In June 1763,' replied Martin. 'There is the last letter which he wrote to me, which is dated from Bremen. Read it yourself. It is very short; and there is nothing particular in it, except that he intends to seek his fortune abroad. My poor

brother! I have never heard anything of him since, and I am afraid he may have got into difficulties.'

'Perhaps not,' said the stranger. 'But may I ask you one question more? Have you any papers relating to your parents?'

'Certainly; I have the certificates of their births, the certificates of their marriage and of their deaths,' said Martin. 'These papers have always been valuable to me, and they have become doubly so since I left my own country to come here. The old papers are a precious memorial to me. I would not have them lost or destroyed for anything in the world; and they do not take up much room.'

'You have done very right to preserve them. May I ask you to show them to me?'

Martin brought them. The stranger read them twice over very attentively, made a few entries in his note-book, and then said,—

'It is all correct, and I think that I shall soon have some good news to communicate to you. Take care of these papers, for they may be wanted in an affair of the greatest importance to you. Do you understand me?'

'Oh yes,' replied Martin; 'I understand you quite well. But may I ask what this good news is, and what this affair is? Perhaps you can tell me something about my poor brother? Oh, if you can, do

so ; I entreat you not to keep me any longer in suspense !’

‘It is possible, even probable, that I may be able to give you some intelligence respecting your brother,’ replied the stranger in a reserved manner ; ‘but at present I can give you no information on the subject. Have patience. In a few weeks everything will be cleared up. Till then allow me to act as I think for the best. To-day I shall leave this neighbourhood, to which I came for particular reasons ; but I shall not forget your concerns. Good-bye, Mr. Martin. I hope that always, and in all circumstances, you will be as honest and as upright as my friend the forester says you are.’

After having said these words, the stranger departed and left Martin not a little troubled and perplexed. ‘Who was this stranger ? What did he want ? Why did he ask so many questions about William, and about the old papers ? Why did he say that so much care must be taken of them ?’ These puzzling questions were meditated on by Martin as he swiftly plied his shuttle, but he could not succeed in solving them. It seemed to him certain that the stranger had some news to give him, either of his brother, or of some other William Martin. There were many families of the name of Martin at Bredenbek, and more than one among them might be called William. The weaver,

quite unable to guess the truth, tried to think no more of the matter. He merely asked the forester one day who the stranger was. 'He is one of the most celebrated lawyers in Bremen,' replied the forester, and Martin was about as wise as he was before. What could he have to do with a lawyer? The weaver could find no reasonable answer to this question; and before a week had passed away, he nearly ceased to think of it. Yet he carefully locked up his old papers in the closet, not only because the stranger had advised him to do so, but more especially because he valued very highly these last memorials of his parents and of his country.

Days and weeks passed away. The snow began to melt upon the hills, and the streams again flowed murmuring down their sides. Spring smiled once more on mountain and valley, clothed in her many-coloured robe of flowers. The birds warbled sweetly among the trees, now covered with fresh verdure; but all this time Martin had neither seen nor heard anything of the stranger. Martin, Walter, and even Margaret, had nearly forgotten him, or at least thought of him but seldom, and hoped nothing from him. Everything in the cottage had resumed its usual course. The mother had recovered her health in the mild spring weather, and she attended to her household affairs as she had done before her long

and painful illness. The whole summer Martin worked incessantly at his loom in order to pay off the debts which he had been forced to incur during the winter, and Walter aided him in his efforts to the best of his ability.

Autumn returned, and then another winter. The snow again covered the mountains; the stream in the valley was frozen in its course; yet none of the family in the cottage remembered the stranger.

One day Martin, to his great surprise, saw the postman leave the high road and come towards the cottage.

'What can the postman want with us?' said he in a tone of astonishment, going at the same time to the window. 'It is many years since he has been here.'

On hearing these words, Walter left his seat by the fire, and, full of curiosity, stood beside his father, looking out of the window.

'Perhaps he is bringing us some order from Mr. Volmar,' said he; 'or perhaps he is going to Gonthier's house.'

'I don't think so,' said his father; 'for if he had been going to our neighbour's, he would have left the high road sooner. No; he is certainly coming to us. Do you see, Walter, he is taking a letter out of his leather bag? Ah! I am very impatient to

know what news he is bringing. May God grant that it is nothing bad !'

Margaret left her cooking to see the postman come up, and all the three waited in silent expectation for his arrival. At length the man reached the cottage door. On the threshold he shook off the snow with which he was covered, and entered by the door which had been already opened to him.

'A letter from Bremen,' said he. 'It is prepaid to the nearest town, and costs only twopence for delivery.'

'From Bremen !' exclaimed Martin. 'Who can it be who has written to me from there, since my poor brother left it more than twenty years ago? You have surely made a mistake, my friend. This letter cannot be for me.'

'It is most certainly for you,' replied the postman. 'Look at the address, — *To Mr. Martin, Weaver, Langenau*. I know no other Martin but yourself in this place.'

'Pay the money, Margaret,' said Martin, after having examined the letter on all sides, and looked carefully at the address. 'But who can have sent this letter?'

'I know,' exclaimed Walter, clapping his hands. 'I am sure it comes from the tall gentleman who was staying last winter with the forester, and who

came to see us. Do you remember, father, how particularly he inquired about uncle William? And you know that he came from Bremen, because the forester told you so. Do open the letter, father, and you will see that I am right.'

'It may be so,' said the postman, who, having received his money, was now preparing to depart. 'The letter certainly comes from Bremen. I hope it may bring you good news.'

When the postman had gone, Martin opened the letter. He put on his spectacles, and, while Margaret and Walter stood as near him as possible not to lose a word, he read slowly and attentively what follows:—

'MY DEAR MR. MARTIN,—When I called to inquire about a year ago respecting some of your family affairs, I did not do so from motives of mere curiosity. I cannot delay longer telling you the true motive by which I was actuated.'

'Did I not guess right?' exclaimed Walter. 'The letter is from the gentleman who was here. How anxious I am to know what he can have to say to us!'

'Silence, Walter! Have patience and we shall see,' said his father; and he continued to read as follows:—

'About six months before my visit to Langenau,

I received an important letter from Calcutta in the East Indies. Before making you acquainted with all its contents, I must inform you of a melancholy event, which will distress you much, but which, I hope, you will bear with Christian resignation. I learn from the letter that William Martin, a native of Bredenbek in Westphalia, who was residing a few miles from Calcutta, had just died there. After my conversation with you in your cottage, and the examination of your papers, I came to the conclusion that this William Martin must be your brother, the same who had quitted Bremen more than twenty years before.'

'Oh yes, certainly, it is indeed my poor brother William,' said Martin, wiping away the tears from his eyes. 'Then he is dead, poor fellow! dead, far away from home, the home which he was never to see again,—far away from his only brother, who would have tried to soothe his last moments, and would have tenderly closed his eyes! Poor William, he was always so good!'

'But,' said Walter, 'it is not yet quite certain that it is really uncle William who is dead. Do go on reading the letter, father.'

'I fear it is too true,' said Martin, sadly; 'but we may learn more particulars from the letter.' He continued :

‘My correspondent told me, besides, that William Martin had made a considerable fortune, which he left by will to his only brother, Jacob Martin, of Bredenbek, in Westphalia. I was authorized to take the necessary steps to find out the said Jacob Martin, and to communicate this intelligence to him, according to the wish expressed by William Martin in his will, which was opened at Calcutta with all the usual formalities. I did not delay to execute my commission, and, with the assistance of the authorities here, I made a most diligent search. I did all in my power to find out Jacob Martin, but in vain. I found many persons in Bredenbek of the name of Martin, but none of them of the name of Jacob. I learned from the parish register that there had been a person of this name in Bredenbek, but no one could tell me what had become of him. One old man had a faint recollection that Jacob Martin had left the village many years before to go to Prussia, but he knew not to what town, or even to what province. Nevertheless, that I might not neglect even this slight trace of him, I inserted an advertisement in all the Prussian newspapers, requesting Jacob Martin to communicate with me, and he would hear of something to his advantage. There were no answers to these advertisements, and I was on the point of writing to Calcutta to say that no one of the name of Jacob Martin was to be found

in Germany, when I was obliged by pressing business to visit the part of the country where you live. Chance, or rather Providence, willed that my purse, lost in the forest, should be found by your honest boy, Walter. One cannot fail to admire the ways of Providence in this matter. If your son had been dishonest, and had kept the purse he found, how severely his fault would have been punished! It is most probable that I should never have found you out in your remote village; and by keeping the purse you would have lost a large fortune. You may therefore consider that you will receive your brother's fortune as a reward for teaching your son uprightness and the fear of God.

'When I compared the extracts from the parish register with the information I obtained from your old papers, I felt certain I was not mistaken, and that William Martin was really your brother. I wrote at once to Calcutta to inform those concerned of the success of my search for you. Now, when the titles have all been examined, and all the forms gone through, the result is that you may expect to be put in possession of the estate and property of the deceased, which does not amount to less than *one hundred thousand thalers*.* You will perceive that this sum, well invested, will prevent you from ever again suffering from the poverty in which I

* About £15,000 English money.

found you at Langenau. I think that you would do well to come here at once, without delay, to arrange your affairs. Do not forget to bring your papers, which I hope you have carefully preserved. If you dislike to undertake the long voyage to Calcutta, you will easily find here a mercantile firm that will undertake to receive your money for you. Of course you will have to pay them something for their trouble, but you will avoid the expense and risk of a long sea voyage. As I thought that such an arrangement might suit you, I have already mentioned an agreement of this kind to a mercantile firm in Bremen, who agree to undertake the settlement of all your brother's affairs, and who will remit to you, after all liabilities are paid, the sum of 98,000 thalers.* I advise you, sir, to accept these proposals, which seem to me both reasonable and just; and I hope soon to have the pleasure of seeing you at Bremen. If you do not chance to have enough money for the expenses of the journey, I have written to my friend the forester to advance to you whatever money you require.

‘ I remain, Sir,

‘ Yours truly,

‘ WOLFGANG REIMAR.’

* The Prussian ‘*thaler*’ or dollar is worth about three shillings in English, therefore 98,000 thalers would amount to about £14,700 English.

Poor Martin's voice trembled so much that he could scarcely finish reading the letter. He stopped several times to utter exclamations of surprise. Margaret and Walter occasionally interrupted him also, to express their astonishment at the extraordinary news. When Martin, with a trembling hand, laid the letter on the table, they stood looking at each other in silent amazement, and it was several minutes before they spoke.

'Oh, can it be true?' said Margaret, clasping her hands. 'Is it not a dream?—98,000 thalers!'

'Father, it is impossible!' said Walter; 'I cannot believe it! It must be ninety-eight, and the thousand must have been added by mistake. Even ninety-eight thalers would be a very large sum to poor people like us.'

'No, no,' replied Martin; 'it is quite plainly written,—*ninety-eight thousand*. Look for yourself,' replied he, pointing to the words with his finger,—'*ninety-eight thousand!* I think I at least know how to read.'

'But, father, it is not possible!' said Walter with a deep sigh. 'We should be richer than Mr. Volmar himself! No, it cannot be; you must be mistaken!'

'Look at the words yourself, you foolish boy,' replied Martin, whose eyes sparkled with delight. 'It is very clearly written. Yes, wife; yes, my boy, we are now rich and powerful! richer than Mr.

Volmar! We can now have a beautiful house, fine dresses, horses, and carriages. Yes, wife, it is all true! We are rich, and we will never again need to work hard from morning to night.'

'Oh,' said Walter, who was beginning to believe in their good fortune, and was quite delighted with it, 'how much good we may do with all this money! Shall we not help all our neighbours, father? The poor people in the valley will be well off now, and not one of them will ever shed tears any more because he cannot provide bread for his family. Ah, father, how happy this thought makes me!'

'Doubtless, doubtless,' replied Martin, as if scarcely hearing what his son had said; and again taking up the letter, he read it once more, as if to assure himself that this extraordinary fortune was not a dream but a true and solid reality. And, indeed, there was no room for doubt. The letter was clear; no error, no mistake was possible. But Margaret was not yet quite convinced.

'Who knows,' said she, 'if the stranger is not jesting with us? Think, Martin; can you believe that your brother, who, as you have often told me, left Bremen without a farthing, could possibly have made so large a fortune? Indeed, it is incredible.'

Martin was silent. It was indeed very difficult to believe that William, his poor brother, should have made so much money without having written to him

even once. The two brothers had passed their early days together; they had loved each other very much. How could he believe that William, rolling in wealth, should not have remembered his brother whom he knew to be in poverty? The thing was so improbable, that Martin became pale as he thought of it. Nevertheless, he recovered himself a little when he remembered the familiar sentence which Gonthier had so often repeated to him.

‘Ah!’ said he, ‘our neighbour was in the right, —“*gold hardens the heart!*” William in his prosperity never thought of the brother whom he had left at home in poverty. “*Gold hardens the heart!*” That explains it all, Margaret. Besides, how could you think that the gentleman would do so foolish a thing as to jest with us about such a matter?’

‘I am sure he would not,’ said Walter. ‘The gentleman seemed to me to be an upright honourable man; and I well remember how surprised he was when he heard my name. Then why should he have taken the trouble to come to see us? Why should he have asked for old papers, and have written so much out of them in his note-book? No, no! it is quite out of the question to suppose that he is jesting with us. Then remember that he prepaid the letter from Bremen. Do people throw away money in this way for a jest? Besides, does he not say in the letter that the forester will

advance money to my father? This gives us a simple means of finding out the truth. Let my father go to the forester, and if he gives him the money, there is no more reason to doubt; and we may be sure that Providence has really sent us this wonderful fortune.'

'You are right, Walter,' said his father. 'I will go with the letter to the forester. If he gives me the money, there will be no more doubt about the matter; for people are not such fools to throw away twenty or thirty thalers for nothing, and my journey to Bremen will at least cost that.'

Without delay Martin took his hat and stick, and hastened to the forester's house. As on the day when he had returned from Mr. Volmar's, he walked on quickly, looking down, and seeming neither to hear nor to see the salutations of his friends and acquaintances whom he met on the road, or who were seated at the doors of their houses as he passed. He did not notice any of them, but rushed on impetuously, his whole frame trembling, and his mind in a state of the greatest agitation. He was quite out of breath when he reached the forester's house, who was so much surprised to see a man usually so calm and quiet in such a state of excitement that he supposed something terrible had happened.

'What can possibly be wrong with you, Martin?' said he, looking quite concerned.

‘Nothing, sir—nothing,’ stammered Martin, who had scarcely recovered breath. ‘I only wished to ask you if you are really going to give me money to take me to Bremen?’

‘Money to take you to Bremen! You have lost your wits, friend. What are you thinking of?’

‘Then you know nothing about it!’ said Martin, becoming as white as a sheet. ‘I see well now that I have been shamefully deceived. But he shall answer for it. Let him take good care not to come back here!’

‘You are losing your senses, Martin,’ said the forester, laying his hand on his shoulder. ‘What is the matter with you? Who has deceived you? Who must not come back here? Speak! explain yourself!’

Martin was unable to reply. Overcome by the disappointment of his hopes, he threw himself into a chair, hid his face in his hands, and deplored his fate in broken sentences and bitter words. The forester did not for a moment doubt that Martin had lost his senses, and was thinking how he could get him conveyed to a place of safety, when the same postman who had been at Martin’s cottage a short time before now came up bringing a letter for the forester, who took it, glanced quickly over its contents, and at once understood what Martin wanted.

'Come,' said he, 'don't be so down-hearted. The letter I have just received makes matters all right. I know all about your business now, and I am ready at this moment to lend you as much money as you require. If at first you had been more reasonable, and had shown me the letter you had received from Bremen, you would have spared yourself all this suffering, and I would have at once given you the money; for my excellent friend Wolfgang Reimar is quite incapable of deceiving you, as you seemed to suspect. You ought to be ashamed, my good friend, to be so intoxicated with the prospect of being rich as to allow yourself to behave like a madman.'

Martin looked earnestly at the forester, and his colour returned.

'It is then really true!' exclaimed he, trembling with agitation. 'Will you really give me the money?'

'Certainly! You may read this letter yourself. You may set off for Bremen when you like; the money is ready.'

Martin snatched the letter almost rudely from the forester's hand, read it with sparkling eyes, and uttered an exclamation of joy.

'It is true! really true!' said he, rising from his seat, and, seizing the hand of the forester, he shook it heartily. 'It is all right! I am rich,

and I will live in comfort like Mr. Volmar! I don't think he will turn me out of his house now, like a miserable hound.'

'Martin,' said the forester gravely, 'you are now a rich man., May God grant that you may make a good use of the gifts which He has so freely bestowed upon you! When the Lord sends us blessings, He requires of us great duties; may you ever remember this!'

'I shall not forget it,' said Martin hastily. 'Will you now give me the money, sir? for I wish to start for Bremen to-day.'

The forester saw that Martin was not in a fit state of mind to listen to advice. He therefore opened his desk, and laid fifty thalers on the table, saying,

'Give me your receipt and take this money. I hope that the fortune which you are going to receive may really make you happy.'

Martin wrote the receipt, quickly pocketed the money, and scarcely waiting even to thank the forester, hastened out of the house, with a face flushed with triumph. The worthy forester looked after him, shaking his head doubtfully.

'Who could believe,' said he, speaking to himself, 'that money could thus pervert a man's heart? This man seems never once to have thought of thanking God for the blessing which he has re-

ceived. In his senseless rapture, he does not appear even to remember that it is by the death of his brother that he has become so rich, and yet he once loved that brother tenderly. If William had died poor, Martin would have wept for his loss. William leaves him a fortune, and Martin does not shed a tear for him! His heart is fixed on the golden treasure; and the loss of his brother, the companion of his childhood, the friend of his youth, causes him not the least regret! Yes, "*gold hardens the heart.*" May God preserve me from the desire of gain! I desire to pray as Agur did, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain" (Prov. xxx. 8, 9).



CHAPTER IV.

THE TEMPTATIONS OF WEALTH.

'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.'—
PSALM lxi. 10.

SOME years had elapsed since the return of Martin from Bremen laden with riches. Great changes had taken place during the interval. Martin's little cottage might still be seen on the slope of the mountain, under the shade of the oaks, but the weaver was not now seated there before his loom, plying his shuttle with skilful hand. The cottage was now uninhabited. Yet sometimes through the narrow window there might be seen the figure of Walter, who had now become a handsome young man. His father, Mr. Martin, the rich manufacturer, now lived in a large fine house in the village. If Martin had had his own way, he would long ago have destroyed the cottage in which he had lived so many years, for it seemed

to stand as a silent witness of his former poverty; but Walter had so earnestly entreated him to allow it to remain, had pleaded even with tears for the home where he had passed his happy childhood, that his father could not resist the earnest request of his only son. The cottage, therefore, was left standing, but no one cared for it, or even entered it, except Walter. He often passed many hours there in solitude and quietness. He liked to sit in his little room, with its clean whitewashed walls, to look at the empty cage where the bird once sang, the pet of his childhood, the bed where his sick mother had lain, beside which he had prayed to God for her recovery, and the now neglected loom where his father used to work. All these things were to him a memorial of past times. He had now begun to regret that his family had ever left the cottage, and that their home was changed. Riches had not brought happiness to him, and he would willingly have exchanged the luxuries he now enjoyed for his former poverty, which had had its pleasures as well as its sorrows.

His generous expectations had not been realized. He had hoped that his father would share his superfluity with the companions of his former poverty; he had hoped that in future the inhabitants of the village would not experience the misery of laying their heads on their pillows harassed with cares

for the morrow; he had hoped that the poor would find in his father a comforter, a support, a benefactor in their distress; but alas! every one of these hopes had been disappointed. At first it had seemed as if Martin's wealth were to benefit all the inhabitants of the village. He built a grand house for his own residence, surrounded by a beautiful garden, spacious work-rooms and houses for his workmen, and he gave employment to many poor people. He even gave them hopes of a better future, offered higher wages to the weavers who were working for Mr. Volmar, and this induced them to leave their old master and to work for him. This state of things went on during the first year, and the workmen were better paid than they had been by Mr. Volmar; but after this, when it was impossible for them to return to their old master, Martin told them that he intended to lower their wages even below what they had been formerly receiving. This announcement was received by them with grief and indignation. Many of them would then have liked to return to the service of Mr. Volmar, but it was too late. Mr. Volmar had brought other workmen from a distance, and now refused to listen to the requests of those he had formerly employed. Pressed by urgent necessity, many of the workmen were compelled to submit to Martin's conditions; and these were so hard,

that the poor men, who had found it difficult enough before to gain a livelihood, were now exposed to the severest privations.

Walter, whose heart was as generous and noble as it had ever been, saw all these things with the deepest grief. He often entreated his father to have compassion on the unfortunate people who implored his mercy, but he did not always succeed in moving him to pity them; and the tears and sighs of those that were so grievously oppressed, wounded the kind and sensitive feelings of the good young man. How willingly would he have relieved them all if he could! But, alas! he had not always the means of doing so. He often thought of the words which their neighbour Gonthier had said to his father at the time Mr. Volmar so harshly refused his request: '*Gold hardens the heart.*' How sadly had these words been fulfilled in his father's case, who had formerly been kind, compassionate, and liberal to the companions of his poverty; and now that he was rolling in wealth, when he might have been the benefactor of the village, and might have rejoiced the hearts of all the poor and afflicted, had, on the contrary, become hard-hearted and indifferent to their misery, even more unkind and inhuman than Mr. Volmar had ever been!

Walter saw and heard all. He saw the dark looks that were cast at his father; he heard the muttered

reproaches and abuse, mingled with threats, which were murmured against him; and these things made his heart bleed. The riches they possessed, far from giving him pleasure, were a burden which he would gladly have thrown off to resume his former life of hardship and privation. In former times, in their cottage, they had been often poor in money, but very rich in mutual love. Now they did not want money, but they had lost the love. It had disappeared like the snow under the beams of the sun; and as the snow melts easily into water, so the love of their old neighbours had been changed into aversion, contempt, and hatred. This had caused greater grief to Walter than any of the privations he had formerly endured. He would willingly have relinquished the pomp and luxury of wealth; but he could not consent to give up the love, and confidence, and sympathy of the old companions of his joys and sorrows,—even the very thought made him feel the most heartfelt grief, and caused him inexpressible sorrow.

Martin observed his son's sadness, but did not take any notice of it. He hoped that his son's benevolent feelings, which he called 'foolish weakness,' would by degrees be changed or overcome. Avarice, the demon of riches, had obtained such entire dominion over Martin, that all the formerly gentle and kind affections of his heart had been

completely stifled. Since he had become so rich, one thought alone occupied his heart and mind, and that was, how to keep and increase his riches. Gold was his idol, his supreme good; and his greatest happiness consisted in contemplating it. What did the misery of others signify to him, provided he himself was rich? What signified their hunger if he were satisfied? He shut his ears to the despairing entreaties of the helpless poor, and opened them only to listen to the jingling of his money,—more delightful to him than the blessings of the needy. Martin comforted no one, helped no one, had done nothing for any of his fellow-creatures since he had become rich. He knew nothing of the noblest use of money, of the '*power of gold*' in its highest and purest exercise in works of benevolence and charity. How could he know it, since he had habitually shunned the cottages of the poor, and turned away his eyes from beholding their sufferings, and repulsed with bitter and scornful words those who ventured to go to his magnificent house to entreat his assistance? He liked better to be rich than to be beloved; he preferred gold to the esteem of his fellow-men; and he shunned and avoided his former friends,—not because they were less worthy than before, but because they were poor and he was rich. Thus by degrees all his friends were alienated from him; and the richer he was in money, he was so

much the poorer in heart. He stood alone. Even his best and most faithful friend Gonthier, who in the day of his distress had offered to share his little all with him, had now forsaken him; or rather Martin, by his pride and temper, had driven this good friend away. Gonthier never visited him unless upon indispensable business; and even then he did not remain a moment longer than was necessary. There were no more pleasant conversations, no longer a trace of the familiarity of old times; and if on any occasion Martin, moved by caprice, tried to return to their old footing, Gonthier answered him shortly, and took advantage of the first favourable opportunity to break off the conversation.

One evening about twilight Gonthier went to the house of the rich man, and instead of seeking him as usual in his counting-house, he went to the door of the private house where Martin lived. He said to the servant who opened the door that he wished to speak to the master of the house. The servant refused to admit a man so poorly clad to his master's parlour, and told him rudely to go to his master's counting-house, where Mr. Martin saw his work-people; but Gonthier, quickly pushing aside the servant without much ceremony, said to him in a firm tone,—

‘Go, friend, and tell Mr. Martin that I, the

weaver Gonthier, wish to speak with him, and that I shall wait for him in his parlour. Do you understand me? Make haste and go, for I do not like to lose my time.'

The servant, shocked with the rough manners of the honest artisan, whom in his arrogance he regarded as much his inferior, replied in a rude tone, 'I do not take orders from you, my good fellow. Go out quickly, or I will send you out in another manner which will not be to your taste. I am not accustomed to admit beggars to my master's parlour.'

These offensive words sent a red flush to Gonthier's face, and gave him a great desire to throw this important personage down the front steps; but he contented himself with taking him rudely by the arm, and causing him to descend the few first steps. The servant uttered a cry of pain or rage, and at that moment Walter appeared on the scene.

'What is the matter?' asked he. 'Ah, it is you, neighbour Gonthier; you are most welcome! But why are you quarrelling with the footman?'

'He wished to prevent me from waiting in the parlour for your father, Mr. Walter,' replied Gonthier; 'and he refused to tell Mr. Martin that I wished to speak with him.'

'Go and tell him directly,' said Walter; 'and take good care, John, never to send away any one

who wishes to speak with my father. I will not permit impertinence or rudeness to any of my father's friends. Come, dear Mr. Gonthier, we will go together and wait for my father in the parlour.'

John obeyed without hesitation; and Gonthier followed Walter into the private sitting-room of the rich manufacturer, the magnificence of which he saw with surprise mingled with disapproval. There were rich carpets, pictures in superb gilt frames, luxurious sofas, soft easy-chairs, silk curtains, mirrors of large size; and this was the apartment of a man who, a few years before, lived in one of the most miserable cottages in the village!

'Yes, it is easy to see,' muttered he to himself, 'the man who spends so much money on things such as these has not the means of assisting his poorer brethren!' Then addressing himself to Walter, he said, 'Dear Walter, I liked your cottage under the oaks better than this fine room. I felt myself much more at ease, and much happier there than here!'

Walter smiled sadly,—

'I think as you do,' said he. 'About an hour ago I was in the dear little old cottage, and I felt myself more comfortable there. I cannot be merry in this fine house. Come and see me sometimes at the cottage, Gonthier, and we shall have some friendly talks as we used to have in old times. I

have just had the cottage repaired. It is certainly not so grand as this room, but you will see how neat and comfortable it is.'

'Yes,' said Gonthier; 'and doubtless the old loom has been sent away to make room for a sofa, or some fine piece of furniture.'

'No, Gonthier, no,' replied Walter warmly; 'the loom is in its place, and will remain there as long as I live. I often use it to ply the shuttle, as much to keep my hand in practice as to remind me of the old times of freedom and poverty. Do not imagine, Gonthier, that the possession of riches has blinded me to such a degree as to make me forget the past. I often remember it, and, believe me, not always without sadness.'

Gonthier seized Walter's hand, and shook it cordially.

'Yes, yes,' said he, 'I know that you are a worthy young man, and that everything would go on better if your father would take your advice, instead of considering nothing but his own avarice; but I forget,—you are his son, and I ought not to blame him in your presence. Do not be so sad, dear Mr. Walter! By God's blessing your father's feelings may undergo a change. He was not unkind or hard-hearted when he was struggling against poverty; let us hope that he will become again like his former self.'

‘God grant that he may!’ said Walter, with a deep sigh. ‘But I hear him coming. Have you anything to say to him in private, Gonthier? for in that case I will leave you.’

‘No, no, stay,’ replied Gonthier. ‘The whole world might hear what I have to say to your father. May God touch his heart, that I may not speak to him in vain!’ Martin entered with a face clouded with care, and, looking annoyed, he saluted Gonthier haughtily with a slight bend of his head.

‘Well, neighbour, what have you to say?’ said he. ‘I hope that you are bringing me good news, for I do not like to be disturbed for nothing when I am at business.’

‘I can soon tell you all I have to say,’ replied Gonthier, without losing his self-possession, notwithstanding the rather unpolite way in which he had been received. ‘I wish to speak to you about poor Stephen Hildebrand. There is great distress in his house. The father has been ill and confined to bed for several weeks; he has five little children, and his honest industrious wife is killing herself with work, without being able to provide bread for them. Mr. Martin, I think you ought to do something for this unfortunate family. Hildebrand was one of your best workmen when he was in health. Give him a small advance of money, and I will be security that he will soon earn it and repay you,

when he recovers his health and is able to work again.'

The manufacturer knitted his brows, and answered, putting his hands in his pockets,—

'You might have spared yourself the trouble of coming here, neighbour. Do you wish to make my work-people negligent and lazy? That would not do. I am sorry for Hildebrand, who was a good workman, I must confess; but I have always paid him punctually. I can do nothing for him, for I will not depart from the principle I have laid down. I never give advances, Gonthier, never! Where would it end? Don't you see that every one of them would come to ask an advance when he wanted to buy tobacco, or to go out for a day's pleasure? No, no; it is a settled thing, and you ought to have known it, Gonthier, and not have disturbed me for such a trifle.'

Gonthier looked down and was silent for a moment. There was a violent struggle in his mind; but he soon recovered himself, and without showing the deep indignation he felt, he said calmly,—

'Mr. Martin, there is an honest and industrious family suffering from hunger, and you call that a trifle! Come with me to Hildebrand's cottage, and see for yourself the lamentable condition they are in. My heart bleeds still at the bare remembrance of it, and I am too poor to help them; but you

could do it so easily. I was there about an hour ago and gave them the little mite I could spare. Poor unhappy Hildebrand was lying on a couch of dried leaves, scarcely covered with a few rags, and suffering terribly from fever. His kind hard-working wife was seated by him, supporting his head and trying to soothe him, while the tears were running down her pale and agonized face. The five children were gathered round the dying embers of a fire, and were silently weeping with cold and hunger. The sight might have softened a heart of stone; and I am sure, Mr. Martin, that you could not look at it unmoved. A trifle! Call it rather the very depth of desolation and misery; and let me entreat you to help them since you are rich; you can and ought to do so.'

'I ought,' said Martin in an angry tone. 'Who, then, has a right to oblige me to do so? All that I have would soon be spent if I were to help everybody who is in distress. There would soon be an end of my riches. Not a word more, Gonthier. I have heard enough. The wife was here this morning: she deafened me with her complaints. I wish you would all leave me in peace. I do my duty, and I pay punctually whatever I owe. No one can exact anything more of me. Do you understand me, Gonthier? I wish to hear no more of this story.'

Gonthier remained silent for a moment; then he suddenly rose, darted on Martin an angry look which pierced to his heart like a dagger, and said to him in a solemn tone,—

‘Martin, you shall hear no more from me of this story, since that is how you speak of Hildebrand’s distress. Assistance shall be given to this unfortunate family even if I were to sell my poor cottage for the purpose. Yet I have to say a few more words to you. Do you remember the day you were in distress as Hildebrand is now; when your wife was ill as he is; when you went to the town to ask Mr. Volmar for a small advance, which he refused to you as you have just refused what I have asked for Hildebrand? On the evening of that day I went to your house to offer you the half of all the money I possessed. You were indignant with Mr. Volmar, and you were abusing him for having sent you away with a humiliating refusal, just as you in your turn are now treating me. I then tried to calm you by telling you that “*gold hardens the heart,*” and you replied,—your son here will remember your words,—“If ever I become rich, you will see how I will share my riches with the poor! Ah, certainly I could never forget the cruel distress I have suffered. I would never treat any one as Mr. Volmar has treated me, for I know too well what it is to eat one’s bread moistened with tears!”

These were your very words, Martin, and you know whether your conduct is in accordance with them. You have become rich; you have forgotten your former distress; and you are more hard-hearted than the man whom you then abused, and whom you now imitate. I go; but remember, God will judge you according to your works!

While Gonthier was speaking, Martin felt ashamed. He bent his head and looked on the ground. His conscience made its voice heard, and there was remorse in his heart; but these better feelings soon passed away, and he returned to his hardened state of mind. He felt angry that poor Gonthier should, as it were, constitute himself the judge of the actions of his superior, as Martin now considered himself. Should a poor working man treat *him*, the rich manufacturer, with so much freedom? His anger on account of this helped to stifle the voice of his half-awakened conscience.

‘You are very insolent,’ said he to Gonthier. ‘Go out of my house, and never come back! It would be a strange thing if I were obliged to argue with every beggar who comes here. Go out, I say, and take care never to set your foot inside this house again!’

‘Oh, father, father!’ exclaimed Walter in a sorrowful tone, ‘think that it is kind, friendly, honest Gonthier that you are treating in this way.’



MARTIN THE WEAVER.

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'Yes, no doubt of it,' said Gonthier; 'it is the very same man to whom your father once said that he would never forget the kindness he had offered him in the day of his distress. And how does he remember it now? Ah! people may well say that promises are like the idle wind. May God help you, Walter! And as for your father, I pray that God may give him grace to become a better man. Farewell. You will never see me again in this house!'

Opening the door quickly, Gonthier walked away with a firm step.

'Call him back, father; pray do call him back,' said Walter in a tone of entreaty, and with eyes filled with tears. 'Do not let him leave us in this way. He is a worthy man, the best in all the village.'

Martin shook his head, and replied with a gloomy, angry look, 'Be silent, Walter. This fellow is too bold. Let him show himself here again, and I will have him at once turned out.'

Walter covered his face with his hands, and wept bitterly. In a few minutes he rose abruptly, hastily went out, and tried to overtake Gonthier, calling on him loudly by name.

'Here I am,' answered a well-known voice.

Walter, with uncovered head, ran on as quickly as he could, and was soon by the side of the honest weaver.

'Come with me,' said Walter, much agitated; 'I

wish you to go with me to poor Hildebrand's house. We must help the afflicted family. Here is my watch, my ring, and the little money I have in my purse. Come quick, Gonthier, and let us buy what they need. We will then remove poor Hildebrand to my little cottage in the wood: it is warm and comfortable, and there is a good bed in it. His wife may go with him there, and you and I must see the children provided for. Come, dear Gonthier, let us not leave them in misery any longer.'

'Excellent young man,' said Gonthier, seizing Walter's hand and shaking it warmly, 'you are what you ought to be. You are not one of the rich men of whom our Lord Jesus says, that it is more difficult for them to enter the kingdom of heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. May God bless you, as I implore His blessing upon you from my very heart! Come, my dear boy, come and enjoy the fruits of your good action, and see tears of joy flow from the eyes of those whom you are going to comfort. I expected this of you. Come; the happiness of the poor family whom you are going to relieve will rejoice your kind heart.'

Gonthier took Walter by the arm, and they went together to Hildebrand's cottage, which was no great distance from the little dwelling in the wood formerly occupied by Martin and his family. On the way, the weaver went into a baker's shop and bought

bread with some of the money that he had received from Walter; then they went on to the house of the sick man. Everything was exactly as Gonthier had described it. The children were crying near the embers of the fire, the mother was overwhelmed with grief, and the father was tossing with pain on his miserable couch of leaves. Walter and Gonthier hastily divided among the hungry children the bread they had brought, and then proposed to their mother to remove her husband to Walter's cottage, where he would receive all the care necessary in his condition. They told her, too, that Walter and Gonthier would provide for the children till their father should recover his health. The mother shed tears of joy, the children uttered exclamations of delight, and the poor father, clasping his emaciated hands, looked upwards with an expression so full of gratitude, that Walter's heart beat quickly, and his eyes were filled with tears. Gonthier approached him gently, and whispered these words in his ear,—

'You see, sir, the blessings riches can bestow. You see the "*power of gold*," which, as with a magic wand, can change grief into joy, and anguish into happiness. You possess this power; oh may you always use it aright! May this be the rule of your life. Ah! if your father only knew how much happiness he loses by depriving himself of the pleasure of doing good!'

‘If he were in my place, and could see what I see here,’ said Walter, ‘no doubt his heart would be softened. Let us hope that God will change it, and that he may see that the true pleasure of riches consists in comforting the poor and needy, and the greatest joy his gold could give him would be to receive the thanks and blessings of the distressed.’

The same evening Hildebrand was removed to Walter’s cottage, and his wife accompanied him. Gonthier took the children home to his own house. When Martin heard what his son had done for the poor people, he appeared vexed; but he could not find fault, because he had given the cottage to Walter, and had allowed him to do with it what he pleased. He muttered a few words about foolish prodigality and ill-judged compassion; but Walter did not appear to hear them, and continued to do good to the poor family, till Hildebrand had recovered his health and was able to resume his work. Walter was so delighted with seeing them made happy, that he would not have exchanged this pleasure for all his father’s wealth, if he were forbidden to employ it in doing good.

How much Hildebrand and his family loved Walter! How gladly the children ran to meet him whenever they saw him coming! The honest and industrious workman who owed him so much showed himself deeply grateful, and expressed it whenever

he met him. All the villagers seemed to feel it also, and endeavoured to show him their feelings of respect and gratitude. Walter thought himself more than repaid for the slight sacrifice he had made, and he was far from regretting it. His only grief was that he could not soften his father's heart, or wean him from his avarice. Martin possessed '*the power of gold*;' why did he not use it for the welfare of all the inhabitants of the village, and enjoy the great pleasure of making others happy? But Martin was ignorant of the best way of using riches. He did not care to know it, for he was wholly under the dominion of the demons of covetousness and avarice.



CHAPTER V.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES.

'The Lord shall smite thee with madness and blindness.'—
DEUT. xxviii. 28.

THE richer Martin became, the more he desired to increase his treasures, and the more he was tormented by the fear of losing them. His avarice was so great that he not only refused to help others, but in time he began to deny himself even the simplest pleasures. He became so miserably sordid, that, notwithstanding the outward appearance of luxury which he still kept up, he really lived more poorly in his magnificent house than he had formerly lived in his cottage. But when he hoped to increase his gains by speculation, he lavished money willingly, and if he succeeded, he rejoiced almost like a child in adding the produce of his successful ventures to the large sums already in his money-chest.

One day an elegant carriage, drawn by two fine horses, drove rapidly through the village and stopped at Martin's door. He looked out of the window, and was much surprised to see that it was his old master, Mr. Volmar, the rich manufacturer, who was coming to visit him. Many years had elapsed since Martin had been so harshly treated by Mr. Volmar, but his memory of the rudeness he had received was as keen, and his resentment as great, as ever. His first impulse was to refuse to see the rich manufacturer, and to close his door against him, as Mr. Volmar's door had formerly been closed to him. But Mr. Volmar's salutation, extremely polite, and almost subservient, caused him to change his mind. He resolved to receive the man who had witnessed his former poverty, and show him the riches and magnificence he now enjoyed. He gave orders that Mr. Volmar should be shown into the most sumptuously furnished of his apartments, and he left him to wait there alone for some time, to show him that he was not visiting the poor workman Martin of old times, but the rich Mr. Martin, his equal in fortune and in importance. At length, after his visitor had waited long enough, Martin made his appearance with the haughty air and scornful tone of a rich upstart. With a disdainful bow, he asked Mr. Volmar why he was honoured by a visit from him. Mr. Volmar, with the greatest

politeness, took Martin's hand and shook it cordially. He wished the utmost prosperity to his former workman, and warmly assured him of the friendship he had always felt for him, long before the late alteration in Martin's fortunes. All this was said with so much volubility and with so sweet a smile, that Martin was quite stupefied, and never attempted to interrupt him. Yet when Mr. Volmar spoke of his old friendship for him, the statement appeared rather too incredible to be believed, and he replied sharply,—

'You deceive yourself, sir; there can be no friendship between us, for you have treated me like a dog, and not like a man! You may have forgotten it, but I remember it well; and I am astonished that you should enter my house after having turned me away from your door!'

'It was an unfortunate mistake, my excellent Mr. Martin,' replied Mr. Volmar earnestly; 'quite a mistake, I assure you. You, who are now a greater manufacturer than I ever was, can easily understand how people may make mistakes in the hurry of business. On the very day when you called upon me, I had just lost a large sum of money: but for that unfortunate circumstance, you would have been very differently treated. Believe me, the remembrance of that interview has often made me feel very uneasy, and I have more than once said to

my work-people and servants, "If honest worthy Mr. Martin should come back, bring him to me immediately, that I may apologise to him for my rudeness." Yes, I gave these orders,—you may ask my servants if I did,—but you did not return again; and then, soon after, you got the rich inheritance from Calcutta, and it is quite natural to suppose that we could not come to an explanation just at that moment. But I assure you, worthy Mr. Martin, that many times since I have been on the point of coming to you to express my regret for what had happened, and to ask your pardon; then again I have hesitated, and have not dared to venture, because I felt how greatly I had been to blame. Oh! my excellent and worthy friend, if you would now consent to forgive me, how happy I should be! Come, let me entreat you to act towards me with Christian charity, generously forgive and forget my bad behaviour to you; perhaps I may acquit myself of some part of the amends I owe you by doing you some signal service. Even now I might have an opportunity of repairing my fault, if you would have the goodness to listen to me.'

Mr. Volmar's words were so flattering, and came so fluently from his lips, that Martin could scarcely believe his ears, when he contrasted them with the harsh and rude words which he had been accustomed to hear from his former master. However,

he felt his indignation gradually subsiding. Who could resist protestations so humble and looks so full of entreaty and repentance? Martin fancied that he even saw tears in the eyes of the once haughty man, and then the icy feelings of his heart melted at once. He replied in a gentle and benevolent tone,—

‘ Well, Mr. Volmar, let us say no more about the matter ; I see that your intentions have not been so bad as I thought, and I am ready to forgive and forget. Times and circumstances are changed ; and I have reason to believe that, if I were to go now to visit you, you would not order me to be turned out of your house.’

‘ My dear sir, how can you even imagine such a thing?’ exclaimed Mr. Volmar, with a gesture of horror which flattered the wealthy Martin excessively. ‘ I should only be too delighted to welcome you, my dear friend. I am entirely at your service. Only try me, and you will soon be convinced that there is not a better or more sincere friend than I am ! I can give you a proof of it at once ; for, my dear sir, it is not without a motive that I have come to see you to-day. I would not have ventured to do so if I had not a proposal to make, which I hope may meet with your approval.’

‘ What is it?’ said Martin eagerly ; ‘ what have you to propose to me?’

‘A very good thing,’ said Volmar in a mysterious tone, looking round him as if to make sure that no one was listening; ‘something much to your advantage. But no one must hear of it except yourself. If any one were to get the slightest hint of it, there would be an end of the matter.’

‘We are alone,’ said Martin; ‘no one can hear us.’

Volmar glanced towards the recess of a window.

‘Some one is there,’ said he in a low voice.

‘It is my son,’ said Martin; ‘but you may speak freely before him.’

‘Oh! your son, is it?’ said Volmar. ‘I shall be happy to make his acquaintance. Will you be so kind as to introduce me to him, my dear sir?’

And he darted like a bird of prey upon Walter, who till then had been paying little attention to the conversation which was being carried on in his presence, because the smooth and cringing manner and flattering words of Mr. Volmar were little to his taste.

He replied to the rich man’s compliments only by a few cold and dignified words, and felt much relieved when his father, seeing his annoyance, saved him from further conversation with this flattering visitor, towards whom he felt a most decided aversion.

‘This man,’ thought he, ‘treated my father harshly when we were poor, and now that we are rich he

fawns upon us and flatters us in the most fulsome manner. It is before the "*power of gold*" that he bends thus. It is gold which he worships; it is to our gold that his hypocritical protestations and his offers of friendship are really addressed. He would prefer a wicked rich man to a poor one, who, though good and honest, was poor. May God preserve me from men such as he is!

Martin's thoughts were very different from those of his son. He was really flattered by the confidence, esteem, and friendship professed towards him by Volmar, and it never for a moment occurred to him that it was his money that was the true attraction. He eagerly breathed the flattering incense that his old employer burned before him, and the triumph of having it offered by that employer rendered it all the more intoxicating. The cunning Volmar saw clearly the effect of his fine words, and hastened to make use of the impression he had made on old Martin in order to further his selfish designs.

'Yes, my worthy, excellent friend,' said he, 'I am glad to have this opportunity of making you forget my past conduct, and being quite friendly with you again. I might have proposed this matter to several of my friends in the town, who would have caught at it gladly, but I did not give them the chance. I thought of you, Mr. Martin, and I

said to myself, "You owe this reparation to the worthy man whom you so cruelly offended without intending to do so. You must make amends to him by putting this good thing in his way." Delighted with the idea, I ordered my carriage at once, and here I am!

'How grateful I am to you, my kind friend!' replied Martin. 'Be assured that I have not the slightest ill-feeling towards you. But may I ask you to tell me at once the reason of your coming to-day? I long to hear your proposal. What is the proposal you speak of? What is to be gained by it? Speak quickly; I am all attention.'

Volmar, with a mysterious smile, rubbing his hands with a knowing look, said in a low tone,—

'What would you think of a clear profit of a hundred—thousand—thalers?'

Martin started with surprise, opened his eyes, and slowly repeated, as if counting the syllables,—

'A hundred—thousand—thalers! it is not possible!'

'I do not say *possible*, but *certain*,' replied Volmar,—'as certain as that two and two make four! It cannot fail, I assure you. In six months the business will have been done, and the hundred thousand thalers will be in your pocket. Is not this a fine offer that old Volmar is making to you?'

* About £15,000.

Has he not made amends for involuntary offence? and can you now cherish any ill-feeling towards him, eh?’

Martin was stupefied. This enormous profit made him feel giddy. ‘It is not possible,’ he muttered, walking rapidly up and down the room. ‘A hundred thousand thalers in six months! Impossible! Mr. Volmar, you take me for a fool, and wish to jest with me.’

‘Don’t be too hasty, my friend,’ said Mr. Volmar, rubbing his hands complacently. ‘Be cool, and take things easily. Composure is necessary in matters of business. I have told you the truth, and not a syllable beyond it.’


‘But if so,’ replied Martin distrustfully, fixing his eyes steadily on Mr. Volmar’s face, ‘why do you not engage in the affair alone? A person who has such a profitable venture does not always care to share it with others.’

‘It is true, Mr. Martin,’ said Volmar. ‘And I will tell you frankly that I would gladly keep all the profit to myself if I could; but there is a little difficulty in the way which I wish to explain to you, and you will see why I wish to give you a share in it.’

Martin, surprised to hear of any difficulty in the way, began again to fear that the whole affair was a jest, and not a serious project. Nevertheless, he

resolved to listen attentively to all that Volmar had to say to him. His avarice was greatly excited, and the mention of a hundred thousand thalers completely dazzled him. He could scarcely command himself sufficiently to listen with apparent calmness to his new friend. A storm raged in his breast, and his ruling passion had broken all bounds. Mr. Volmar saw with pleasure the state of Martin's mind, and began to explain to him in a low voice the plan which was to secure so fabulous a profit.

‘First of all,’ said he, ‘we require money, a great deal of money, for you must know that we need a bait to catch mice; and there lies the difficulty of which I spoke. I can only command half the sum necessary to push the business; I must find a partner who can advance an equal sum. I might have applied to several friends in the town, who would have willingly agreed to do so; but, as I told you, I propose it to you, that (if I may use the expression) I may kill two birds with one stone. In the first place, I had to make amends for my behaviour to you, and, besides, I wished to be in partnership with an honest, clever, and prudent man like you. One of my friends is too irresolute; another, I tell you honestly, is too stupid,—he has neither your intelligence nor your clear-sightedness; and as to the third, I shall go to him if the project does not suit you. Only in this case I trust to your honour that



you will not betray my confidence. I have explained to you my plans and ideas, and I depend upon your uprightness and discretion. Do you not promise me, dear sir, that you will keep my secret ?'

'That is a matter of course,' Martin replied at once. 'But now tell me what sum you require, and when you want it? Tell me everything about the business, for I am anxious to know all the details.'

'You shall know all, dear Mr. Martin,' said Mr. Volmar. 'Permit me only to ask you one question: In three days from this time can you raise forty thousand thalers in ready money ?'

'Sixty thousand if necessary,' replied Martin.

'Well done! capital, my dear sir!' continued Volmar joyfully; and drawing from his pocket a bundle of papers, 'Here,' said he, 'are excellent securities for the sum required, and you may keep them as a guarantee until our speculation is a success,—thus you run no risk. Now I will tell you my plan.'

Then Volmar, speaking in a very low voice (so that Walter, although he was in the room, could not understand what he said), explained to Martin the details of the speculation into which he advised him to enter, to which Martin listened with the deepest attention. The business appeared to him so safe and so certain to succeed, that, when Volmar had finished his explanation, Martin rose almost

overcome with joy, and shook hands warmly with his new friend.

‘First-rate! wonderful!’ exclaimed he. ‘Our success is certain; and I see now that you are my true friend, that you wish me well, and are anxious to make me forget the past. The day after to-morrow, or to-morrow, even to-day, you may have the forty thousand thalers you want. I have the amount in my cash-box, for I am never without ready money. Only say when you wish to have it.’

‘Well, now if you like,’ said Volmar, who could scarcely conceal his delight. ‘Since I am here, it is better to lose no time. The sooner we begin the business the sooner we shall realize the profits. Therefore I will take your money, my dear friend, and leave you my papers as security. I will go home at once to make some preparations for my departure,—for an hour just now may be worth a thousand thalers,—and to-morrow morning, at the dawn of day, I shall be on my way to Paris and London. In less than six months your forty thousand thalers will have produced a hundred thousand. A good merchant ought never to lose a minute; that is my rule, and I have always found it answer.’

‘It is indeed an excellent rule,’ replied Martin, whose head had been completely turned by the magnificent projects of his new partner. ‘Walter, go immediately to the cashier, and tell him to

give you forty thousand thalers. He who gains time gains everything; you are perfectly right, dear Mr. Volmar. Well, Walter, why don't you go at once?'

Walter was hesitating as to what he ought to do. Quietly standing by the window, he had listened to what had passed, and he now cast a glance of mistrust on Mr. Volmar, and a look of silent grief on his father. The young man's mind was not governed by the love of money. He felt disgusted with the cringing politeness of Mr. Volmar, and besides, since he had been desired to fetch the money, he had begun to doubt the honesty of him who was to receive it. Walter's mind was well stored with the truths of Scripture, and he remembered at once the following words: 'They flatter with their tongues. Destroy thou them, O God: let them fall by their own counsels' (Ps. v. 9, 10). 'They speak vanity every one with their neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things' (Ps. xii. 2, 3). 'Meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips' (Prov. xx. 19). 'A flattering mouth worketh ruin' (Prov. xxvi. 28). The truths of God's holy Word had enlightened Walter's mind, and he saw what was right much more clearly than his father did, who was blinded by the love of money. Wal-

ter's wisdom was learned from above, and was pure and true; his father was deceived by flattery and worldly wisdom, which is real folly. The wisdom of the world was not to be compared to the wisdom early learned by the boy, who had studied the Scriptures. Walter remembered these words: 'An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed' (Prov. xx. 21). As he was not blinded by the dazzling '*power of gold*,' he was suspicious of such fabulous profits, and he said to his father in a beseeching tone,—

'Dear father, would it not be better to wait for a few days, or even for one day? I have not much experience in commercial affairs, but my common sense tells me that where there is much to gain there is also much to lose. I entreat you to pause, father, and to wait even only till to-morrow.'

Martin looked in an undecided manner at Volmar, whose face at first darkened for a moment, but almost immediately recovered its usual amiable and bland expression before Martin could observe the shadow.

'Your son is right, Mr. Martin; he is perfectly right,' said Volmar in a soothing tone. 'Reflection is necessary in every case, and especially in an affair of so much importance. Take your time, my friend. Two days will soon pass, and it will not fatigue me too much to return within a week. You

may keep my papers as security; I willingly entrust them to you, for I know that I am dealing with an honest man. This delay will cause no further inconvenience than obliging us to realize our hundred thousand thalers at a little later date; and this will not cause us any inconvenience, unless, to be sure, there should be a war or anything of that kind, which is not at all probable. Therefore think seriously of the matter. In the meantime, it will allow me to go and finish some business I have to do in the town. The profit of our venture will come to us soon enough.'

Volmar's cunning advice only strengthened Martin's resolution, as indeed the clever plotter expected that it would. If Volmar had appeared too anxious to conclude the bargain, Martin would have become distrustful, and would have asked for time; but as Volmar seemed inclined to wait for some days, or even for a whole week, the avarice of the old weaver was fully aroused, as he already began to fear that he might lose the promised gain.

'Why should we delay or hesitate, dear sir?' said he hastily; 'there is no need of thinking any more about it. I can see clearly that your calculations are perfectly correct; and as to the forty thousand thalers,—your papers are sufficient security for me. Go, Walter, as I desire you, to the cashier, and let the sum be brought here at once.'

‘But, father,’ Walter again remonstrated, ‘ought you not at least to examine these papers?’

‘Not a word more, Walter,’ said his father angrily, ‘or I will go myself to fetch the money. To hear you speak, one would imagine that Mr. Volmar is wishing to dupe and deceive me, when, on the contrary, he is giving me the strongest proof of his sincere friendship. Don’t mind this foolish boy, Mr. Volmar; he does not understand business, and his head is filled with nonsensical fancies. No wonder either, for he spends too much of his time among beggars and poor men, and when he chances to meet with a gentleman, he does not know how to behave.’

‘But why should you not follow his advice in this case?’ said Mr. Volmar. ‘He is your son, and I would prefer that he should be satisfied with the security. It will not take long to examine the papers, and you will oblige me by doing so.’

‘I will do so,’ said Martin, ‘since you wish it.’

He opened the bundle of papers, and he found that it was composed of securities of the most valuable description; and, perfectly satisfied with the result of his examination, he tied up the packet again.

‘Now,’ said he to Walter, ‘I hope you have no more objections to make. Go at once for the money, unless you wish to make me really angry.’

Although Walter was not even then quite satisfied with the transaction, he had no pretext for further remonstrance, and he accordingly went to execute his father's orders.

Mr. Volmar, in a complimentary speech, most graciously excused the young man's distrust, and then again turned the conversation to the proposed speculation and the profits to be expected from it. Martin listened to him with increasing delight, and was so absorbed and fascinated by his new friend's words, that he never observed a rapid movement of his hand, by which he most dexterously caught up the packet of papers from the table, and substituted for it another bundle exactly similar in appearance. When Mr. Volmar had successfully accomplished this feat, and had secured his precious papers in his pocket, his eyes gleamed with spiteful and almost ironical joy. At that moment Walter returned, bringing the required sum. Mr. Volmar received it, wrote a receipt for it, and then asked Martin to give him a receipt for the papers left as security, a list of which he produced. As soon as Martin had signed this, Mr. Volmar seized it eagerly, took a hasty leave, threw himself into his carriage, and was driven rapidly away. About an hour after he had left Martin's house, Gonthier arrived there, and asked for Walter.

'Have you not had a visit from Mr. Vol-

mar?' said Gonthier eagerly, as soon as Walter appeared.

'Yes,' said Walter, 'he was here about an hour ago. Have you anything to tell me about him?'

'I have come to warn you,' replied Gonthier, 'not to trust him. I am telling you this for your own sake, for as for your father, it signifies little to me whether he is rich or poor; but you are a kind, true-hearted, generous young man. I like you, and I should be sorry to see you ruined. You must know that this fine gentleman, Mr. Volmar, has been declared bankrupt to-day, and he has robbed many unfortunate people of their last penny. Therefore be on your guard. I have just come from the town, where I heard the news. On my return I met the personage in question reclining in his carriage, which was being driven at full speed. I thought that he might have been with you, and I came on at once to warn you to beware of him.'

'You astonish me!' exclaimed Walter, alarmed when he remembered the transaction that had just taken place. 'What a heavy blow to my father! Fortunately the securities he has left us are good,—I satisfied myself of that by the evidence of my own eyes. But I must go and tell my father this at once. Many thanks, my dear Gonthier, for your friendly warning, though I much fear that it is too late.'

Walter shook hands with this grateful friend, and then hastened to tell his father the news Gonthier had brought. Martin turned pale when he heard what Walter had to say; but, soon recovering from his alarm, he said,—

‘I see that we must lose the hundred thousand thalers of profit that he promised us; but at least we have sufficient securities for the forty thousand thalers that the rascal has got from us. Our loss will not be so great after all. Get the papers he left, Walter; you will find them in my iron safe.’

Walter brought the packet of papers that Volmar had left, the packet that he had so cleverly substituted for the real securities. Martin eagerly opened it; but what was his disappointment to find, instead of the securities and bonds he had seen, only so many sheets of blank paper, all carefully folded and marked on the outside like the real papers! Volmar had played his game so well, that he carried away in his pocket all that was valuable, and left to his dupes only a few sheets of wastepaper. It is more easy to imagine than describe Martin’s despair at the terrible discovery.

He tore his hair, he beat his head against the wall, he uttered the most fearful curses against the bankrupt and all belonging to him. He sent in all haste for a carriage and drove to the town, hoping still to catch the cheat, and recover his dear thalers.

But he arrived too late. The bankrupt had disappeared, and no one could say whither he had gone. Martin was obliged to return home disappointed, and content himself that his beloved thalers were gone for ever, as a child sees a bird, which it had hoped to have caught in a trap, break the snare, and fly off merrily into the neighbouring wood.

When Walter related to Gonthier the account of this clever trick, the latter shrugged his shoulders, and said to the young man,—

‘I am sorry for this on your account, my dear Walter; as to your father, he deserves all he has got. If he had not been blinded by avarice, he might have easily seen that Volmar wished to dupe him. Your father ought to have known by his own experience what the man was, and might have guessed of what villanous acts he was capable. Can you understand how your father, a sensible man, could have been tempted to trust in such a scoundrel, and could have been deceived by his coarse flattery, as a bird is caught by birdlime? Ah, Walter, the truth is that gold not only hardens, it sometimes blinds and stupefies also, so that the voice of the flatterer leads to ruin. Beware, my dear boy, of this fatal influence of riches; for if they have this effect on you, they will be a curse instead of a blessing.’

Walter cordially agreed with Gonthier's w
The loss of the money did not distress him n
Martin was still very rich, and could well bear
loss of the money out of which Volmar had che
him.



CHAPTER VI.

RICHES TAKE TO THEMSELVES WINGS.

'He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him.'—PROV. xxviii. 22.

IF the event related in the last chapter did not cause much sorrow to Walter, it was at least the source of the bitterest grief to Martin, who felt both anger and despair when he thought of it. The loss he had suffered through Volmar's treachery constantly occupied his mind, so that he could think of nothing else. He wandered about during the day-time like one in a dream, with wondering eyes and a frowning brow; and when he thought that he was unobserved, he muttered words such as the following:—'What a misfortune! Forty thousand thalers at a single stroke! What a loss to a poor creature like me!' In the night sleep forsook his eyelids. He tossed uneasily on his bed, sighed, groaned aloud,

and tore his hair. When at last, exhausted by fatigue, he fell into a disturbed sleep, he soon awoke, crying, 'Stop him! stop the thief!' and it was long before he slept again. In the morning, when he was awakened by the golden beams of the rising sun, his first thought was of his lost gold, and this thought haunted him throughout the day. It made him incapable of engaging in business; it shed bitterness into his morning cup; it poisoned his mid-day repast, and closed his heart to any kind of comfort. He did not know what joy was; he never smiled again. Neither the bright sunshine, nor the blue sky, nor the beauty of the earth covered with verdure and sweet-smelling flowers,—neither the song of the lark, nor the sweet warbling of the nightingale, had any charms for him. Nothing moved him, of all that rejoices the heart of man, and fills him with gratitude to his God. Martin thought only of the gold of which he had been robbed. With this thought uppermost in his mind, he was full of bitterness and resentment against mankind.

Still, notwithstanding his losses, Martin was rich enough to live in abundance, if not luxury. Compared with the time when, in his humble cottage, he laboured constantly from morning to night even to get bread for his family, he might now be called rich. Had he not still his fine house, and all the

luxuries in it? Had he not still his factory, where hundreds of workmen laboured for him for *very* small wages, and thus daily increased his fortune? In the last place, had he not still the great bulk of his capital carefully shut up in his iron safe, under bolts and iron bars? Why should he disquiet himself about the morrow? Did he not possess all that was necessary, and still much that was superfluous? Had he not yet abundance of wealth, and were there not thousands of men who would have joyfully exchanged his lot with their own? Ah! doubtless Martin had much reason to thank God for all His great gifts, yet, instead of songs of gratitude, his sordid soul only grumbled that he had lost some money which he could well do without; and he had lost it by his own fault, by trusting a flatterer!

It was a marvellous thing! As long as Martin had lived in poverty, he had been glad and joyful in heart; and since he had become rich, it seemed as if the icy breath of winter had passed over his life as if over a green tree in full blossom, drying up and withering both leaves and flowers, and leaving nothing but the naked branches.

So desolate was his life, so utterly deprived of happiness and even quiet! The demon of riches had seized upon poor Martin, and he was miserable. Walter saw and mourned over the state into which

his father had fallen. 'Ah!' said he, with a deep sigh, 'how I wish that we had remained poor! How I wish that I had not found the purse in the forest, which was the cause of my going to the forester's and meeting the stranger! If we had not got my uncle's fortune we should have been rich in better things—rich in love and in peace, rich in cheerfulness and contentment! These are greater treasures than the gold which has hardened my father's heart and changed his temper.' Such were the thoughts that Walter often expressed to Gonthier, from whom he received frequent visits in the little cottage in the wood; for since Martin had treated Gonthier so rudely, he seldom went to the grand house now the abode of the rich manufacturer, but as the cottage was now Walter's, he could meet his friend there.

Martin's ideas were very different from those of his son. His whole soul was set on recovering the money he had lost, and to attain this object he adopted every means, even such as would have formerly been revolting to him. He hardened his heart more and more against the sufferings of the poor. His avarice was so great that no one now received any help from him; no sick person was allowed the smallest relief. In his own household he was extremely miserly; and even Walter, though his only son, could scarcely get from him enough

for his necessary wants. But it was especially to his work-people that he showed himself without pity. He would not allow them a moment of relaxation from morning to night: no rest at all till the long day's work was done. He compelled them to work over hours, and yet refused to pay them for this extra work. He ground down their wages to the lowest point. He neither studied the Scriptures nor regulated his conduct by what is therein commanded, or he would have remembered such words as these:—'He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches shall surely come to want' (Prov. xxii. 16). 'Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it' (Prov. iii. 27). 'He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he' (Prov. xiv. 21). 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away' (Matt. v. 42). 'Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and not be heard' (Prov. xxi. 13). 'He that hideth his eyes from the poor shall have many a curse' (Prov. xxviii. 27). Martin disregarded all these warnings and exhortations of the Word of God. He used his wealth for evil and not for good, and the verse last quoted was fulfilled in his case.

Walter saw all this with the deepest grief. It caused him great pain to see that his father's harsh-

ness and avarice had made him hated by all the work-people. Walter had seen with much concern glances of hatred cast on his father, and he had heard muttered threats of vengeance when the workmen fancied themselves unobserved. He had even heard curses invoked against his father by those who were suffering from his injustice. Many times had the kind-hearted son implored his father to be more just and generous; often had he represented to him the fatal consequences of his present course of action, but in vain. Martin was deaf to all warnings; and when Walter repeated to him some of the muttered threats that he had heard, his father replied,—‘They dare not attack me; if they touch any of my property, there are police and soldiers in the town, who can be summoned at a moment’s notice.’

Thus the son’s good advice seemed to have no effect except to make the father still harsher and more pitiless, if that were possible. Walter therefore ceased to remonstrate any more, and contented himself with relieving the misery around him as much as was in his power.

One evening, late in the autumn, Walter was returning home from a visit to his old friend Gonthier, who had just told him that the excitement and irritation of the workmen were at their height, and that, unless something were done to calm them,

the consequences might be disastrous. The young man was walking home, thinking seriously on what he had heard, and resolving to speak to his father that very evening, and urge him more earnestly than ever to change his course of proceeding. The evening was dark, heavy clouds covered the sky, and it was only at intervals that a beam of moonlight could penetrate the gloom. Just as Walter opened the door to go into the house, the moon suddenly came from behind a cloud, and as he turned round he caught a glimpse of a dark figure in the shade of the trees, not far from the door. Surprised to see any one there at that hour, he stopped to try and find out who it was.

Walter was really alarmed to see a man hiding among the trees, exactly opposite to the window of his father's room, the shutters of which were open, and he could be distinctly seen writing by the light of a lamp, which shone brightly on his face. The sky had again darkened, and Walter could not distinguish the figure of which he had had a glimpse, as the thick foliage of the lime-trees, acacias, and chestnuts cast a dark shadow over the place. He stood listening to catch the slightest sound. He heard distinctly the click of the lock of a gun, and at the same moment the moonbeams, breaking through the clouds, fell on some glittering object. There was no more room for doubt: an armed man

was certainly hiding in the shrubbery. What did he want? Why this mystery? Why was he armed? A shudder thrilled through Walter's frame as the thought flashed on his mind: 'This man is hidden there to kill my father, who has somehow or other offended him.'

For a moment Walter felt overcome by the awful thought; but soon recovering his self-possession, he rushed towards the shrubbery, and found himself opposite a man of great stature, whose dark form was clearly seen against the shrubs, glistening in the moonlight. He had a gun in his hand, and was in the act of pointing it—against whom? Walter's blood curdled in his veins. Right opposite he saw his father writing near a window, which was brilliantly lighted by a lamp. It was evident that the murderous aim was directed at him. A moment more and the weapon would have been discharged, and his father might have been hit by a bullet. No, that must not be. Walter, as quick as thought, seized the barrel of the gun, wrenched it out of the hands of the man, who recoiled and staggered back in terror, while Walter threw the gun among the shrubs. He then rushed on the man, and seized him by the arm. At this moment the moon shone out brightly, so that the two men could recognise each other.

'Is it you, Mr. Walter?' exclaimed the workman

'Valentine Wenzel, can it be you?' said Walter, grasping still tighter the arm of the pale and trembling workman. 'Speak! what are you doing here at this hour at night? I know that you were going to commit a murder. You were going to assassinate my father.'

The workman, a strong and powerful man, trembled like a leaf, overwhelmed by the consciousness of his guilt.

'Mercy! have mercy upon me, Mr. Walter, for pity's sake! You do not know what has driven me to this dreadful extremity,—I, who could never bear to see a child suffer, and who would not even have killed a fly. If I could tell you how your father has insulted me, trampled me under foot, and despised and scoffed at my misery, my terrible misery! I became like a madman. I got hold of a gun, and I hid myself here to kill somebody. Oh, thanks be to God, who has sent you in time, and has prevented me from being a murderer!'

'You would really have fired then, Valentine? You would have perpetrated the crime? Did you never think in your madness of the sufferings you were bringing on your own head?'

'I thought of nothing, I saw nothing, I heard nothing. I had but one feeling—the desire to avenge the contempt, the scorn, the cruel treatment which I had received from your father. Ah! if you had

suffered what I have suffered for some hours past, you would perhaps have acted in the same way.'

'But what has my father done to you,' asked Walter, 'to drive you to so criminal an attempt?'

The workman seemed to wish to reply, but a convulsive sob stopped his utterance. In his turn he seized Walter by the arm, as if to lead him away with him.

'Where do you wish me to go?' asked the young man.

'Come with me,' replied the workman. 'I cannot find words to express my misery and my despair. You shall see all with your own eyes. Come with me to my cottage!'

Walter followed Wenzel in silence. A few minutes afterwards they reached the workman's house. It was a poor thatched hut. Wenzel pushed open the door with his foot, took Walter by the hand, and led him into a miserable room, where the icy wind of the night penetrated through broken windows. Then the workman, striking a match, lighted a torch of pinewood fixed against the wall, which soon sent a glare of red and smoky light through the narrow dwelling.

Walter looked around him, and his heart was pained at the sight of so much poverty and misery. There was not a table nor a seat of any kind, nothing but the bare walls, one window with the panes

broken, some of them stuffed with paper, and, in the most sheltered corner near the fireplace, a couch of straw, dried leaves, and moss, over which was thrown a ragged covering.

Walter shuddered.

‘You must be very poor,’ said he compassionately.

‘You seem to want even the most necessary things!’

‘Ah!’ replied the workman in a hollow tone, ‘I would have borne everything if I had been able to save my most precious treasure, which the cruelty of your father has torn from me. Hunger, thirst, cold, labour by day and by night, nothing would have been too much for me if— But it is all over now! It is all over at last!’

The pale and agitated countenance of the workman wore an expression of the bitterest agony. He pressed his clasped hands against his forehead and uttered heavy groans, and a torrent of tears flowed from his eyes, which he kept fixed upon the miserable couch. Walter, deeply moved, felt much compassion for this man, even though he had so nearly been the murderer of his father. He laid his hand on the workman’s shoulder, and said to him kindly,—

‘Compose yourself, Valentine. I shall not allow you to suffer longer from poverty, and in order to help you I shall sell the few valuables still in my possession.’

‘It is too late,’ said the workman, groaning. ‘All

is over; no one can help me now! But stay with me for a moment; I wish to tell you all. You shall know how I have been led to forget God and to break His commandments. Dear Mr. Walter, I was formerly happy, even although one of the poorest amongst the poor. The work of my hands sufficed to support me and my only child, my gentle, my beloved Mary. This dear girl was so industrious, so good, so intelligent, that after the death of her mother, about a year ago, she managed my poor household, cooked the food, washed the linen, did everything necessary with her dear little hands; and yet she was very young, scarcely fourteen. When in the evening I returned from the manufactory, she came joyfully to meet me, and the sight of her sweet face made me happy. She drew my chair near the fire and brought me my supper. Although it was often a very poor repast, —generally potatoes and salt,—it appeared delicious to me; for it was Mary who had prepared it, and made it cheerful by her gentle merry prattle. She told me the little events that had passed during the day, and I almost forgot to eat when I was listening to her sweet voice and her gay laugh, which sounded like music to my ears. Yes! poor as we were, I was then a very happy man. But I was seized with fever; I was obliged to give up my work, and Mary's time was occupied in nursing me.

There was not a penny in the house! The neighbours helped us as well as they could; but, very poor themselves, it was but little they had to give. Mary went to see your father. She implored him with tears to help us; but she was refused, and received only harsh words and unjust reproaches. When she returned weeping and sobbing, my heart was nearly broken; but what could I do? I was laid helpless in bed with fever, and to my sufferings from disease were added cruel care and anxiety. We were obliged to sell all our little furniture, bit by bit, to save us from dying of hunger. After some days of horrible distress, I felt myself well enough to resume my work, although still very weak. I hoped that our evil days were over, and that all would soon be well again. I was deceived. God had not yet tried me to the utmost, and greater misfortunes awaited me. My darling Mary fell ill in her turn: my beloved daughter had sacrificed herself to nurse me. She had watched me by night and by day. Grief, over-fatigue, and want of food, had predisposed her to catch the fever from which I had suffered. Ah! my heart was broken when I saw her lying in bed so weak and so miserable. We were alone and entirely forsaken. I could not quit my sick girl, my gentle dear child, to go to work; it would have been leaving her to die. I therefore remained with her, to care for her. night

and day, as she had cared for me. If you had but seen her thanking me with a kind look of her pretty blue eyes, or a pressure of her little soft hand! It repaid me for all my trouble. I could not have left my dear Mary alone to suffer all day unattended. I went to your father, sir; I told him all. I promised that as soon as Mary recovered her health I would work over-hours, I would labour as hard as any other two men. I besought him to give me a small advance, to provide food and medicine for my child, and he refused me! He said that it was contrary to his principles; that he would hear no more on the subject, and that it would be useless for me to return. I went home with my heart crushed. I went to beg in the village,—it was the only resource left me,—and the little I received kept us only for a day or two. Our distress was horrible! It forced me once more to have recourse to your father. Meantime my child was getting worse and worse. I went back to your father the day before yesterday. I implored help with tears and entreaties, and met with the same refusal; I persisted, for I was in despair; I threw myself at his feet. I told him that without speedy help my daughter would die, and such a small advance of money might save her life. I humbled myself in the dust before him. I promised to repay him honourably, to work for him zealously, if he would lend me a small sum. All

was in vain! He spoke of mean beggars who did not 'deserve to live. He threatened to cause me to be imprisoned as an idler and a vagabond. He said that if I were to lie pleading at his feet for three days, he would not give me a penny. I bore it all; I did not answer his harsh words; I only besought him to save my child's life. He ordered me to be turned out of his house, and I returned to my cottage with a wounded spirit and a burning brain. I scarcely knew what I was doing. One evil thought had taken full possession of my mind: "If my daughter dies, he must die too; for since he refuses to help me to save her, when he could do it so easily, I shall look upon him as her murderer!" This thought haunted me, and almost maddened me.'

'How terrible!' exclaimed Walter. 'Why did you not come to me? I would have helped you. I hope it is not yet too late. May not your Mary's life yet be saved? Hasten to go and buy anything you think will relieve her. Use my name; I will pay for everything.'

With a grim and bitter expression, the unhappy father caught the torch of pinewood from the wall, and throwing back the ragged covering that was over the couch of dried leaves, he let the light stream on it. Walter uttered a cry of grief and surprise. There lay the corpse of a beautiful girl,

lovely even in death. A sweet expression of gentleness and peace was on her face, pure and pale, like white marble; her eyes were closed; her wasted hands were folded on her breast.

'Then it is all over! How I grieve for you!' said Walter sorrowfully.

'Yes, it is all over. She is dead—murdered!' cried the poor workman, with a cry of anguish that made Walter shudder.

'I thought of going to you, sir, before it was too late,' said the poor man; 'but after your father's threats, I did not venture to go near your house. He said he would cause me to be imprisoned; and my Mary would have been left to die alone. When my pretty darling died, and I had closed her sweet blue eyes for ever, and could do no more for her, I felt as if my reason was going. I became like a madman. I rushed from the cottage, borrowed a gun from my neighbour George, loaded it with ball, and this evening—you know the rest, sir! I thank God that you came in time to save me from committing murder in my delirium.'

Wenzel threw himself down beside the low couch of his dead child, pressed her wasted form to his heart, and covered her pale lips with kisses. The torch which he had thrown down went out, so that Walter could not see the heartrending scene, but he heard the sobs and groans of the unhappy father.

‘Hear me, Valentine,’ said Walter earnestly, when the miserable man had exhausted himself with his violent grief, and seemed a little more composed; ‘listen to me for a moment. Take now all the money I have with me, and come to me tomorrow; I will do all I can for you. Pray to God, my poor friend, to help you to bear this terrible affliction. Don’t forget to come to me early tomorrow. You still need help, and I will give it to you.’

‘I need no help!’ replied Wenzel, in a voice almost stifled with sobs. ‘It is all over; no one can help me now!’

‘If you want nothing for yourself, think still of *her*,’ replied Walter, deeply moved. ‘She has need of a grave. She must have a grave in a pleasant corner of the churchyard, where you may plant sweet flowers in remembrance of her, where you may go and think of her. You would like her poor remains to be treated with all respect, would you not?’

‘Oh yes, sir,’ said Wenzel, now more composed; ‘I will go to you in the morning. I thank you for your kind offer. I see you are good and wish me well. Oh, if I had only known sooner how very kind you are, I might have gone to you, and my Mary might have been saved! You would not have allowed my darling to die for want of help?’

‘Oh no, most assuredly not!’ exclaimed Walter earnestly. ‘I would have done all that I could to relieve you. But you must at least allow me to help you to do the last sad duties to your child. I must go home now. Farewell till to-morrow. May the Lord bless and comfort you! Seek His help.’

Walter returned home with a heart full of anguish, deeply grieved for the sufferings he had witnessed. It was now nearly midnight; but though he went to bed, he could not sleep. He could not banish the thought of Valentine and his severe affliction. He thought also, with much sorrow, of his own father, over whose hardness he had been long mourning. The thought would arise, How will he answer in the judgment-day to God who has entrusted him with riches, for the use which he has made of them? What can he say if the terrible question is asked, ‘What hast thou done with the talent which has been given to thee? Hast thou given part of thy goods to the poor? Hast thou clothed the naked? Hast thou fed the hungry? Hast thou obeyed the commands, “Rob not the poor, neither oppress the afflicted” (Prov. xxii. 22); “Give to him that needeth” (Eph. iv. 28); “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate” (1 Tim. vi. 17); “Beware of

hardness of heart towards thy poor brother" (Deut. xv. 9)? Hast thou been merciful to the poor and afflicted, or hast thou harshly refused to have compassion on them?' What could his father reply to questions such as these? The solemn scene of the judgment-day, as described by our Lord, was vividly present to Walter's memory. He thought of the awful sentence, when the King shall 'say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal' (Matt. xxv. 41-46).

In the anguish of his mind, as he lay tossing on his bed, Walter again repeated to himself what he had so often before said, 'Ah, if he had but remained poor! if, instead of this fatal gift of

fortune, we had still our former peace of mind and our rejoicing in the Lord! Great is the *power of gold* for good or evil; but greater still the responsibility that is imposed upon us by riches !'



CHAPTER VII.

THE FURNACE OF AFFLICTION.

'The abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep.'—
ECCLES. v. 11.

'When every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands and pray, hear. Thou and forgive.'—2 CHRON. vi. 29.

THE following morning, when Walter awoke, he dressed as quickly as he could, and went to his father's room. What he said to him was never known but by these two; but it was evident that Walter's strong representations and impressive words must have produced a great effect on his father, for shortly afterwards the father and son were seen to leave the house and go to Valentine's cottage. Martin was pale, and evidently much moved when he entered it, and he came out again still more pale and agitated. The sight of poor Mary's corpse, and the deep grief of Valentine, had pierced Martin's heart, and melted

the ice which had frozen over it since he had been rich. With his hat pulled over his eyes, his step tottering, and looking steadily on the ground, he returned home leaning on the arm of his son. He went immediately to his own room, where he shut himself up, forbidding any one but Walter to enter it. He gave Walter unlimited permission to do all the good he could in future to those around him; he even gave him charge of the keys of his iron safe, which till then he had never trusted out of his own keeping. He spoke little, but several times he exclaimed, with an accent of deep grief, 'Oh, is it possible that I really can have become a murderer from the love of this wretched mammon!' He said little more; but it might easily be guessed from these words how much he mourned over the fatal consequences of his harshness and of his avarice, and how bitterly he repented of his want of feeling, and his pitiless conduct towards poor Valentine.

His repentance was the more sincere and acute, because he saw that in all human probability Mary would not have died if he had given even the least help to her father. The scales seemed to fall from his eyes; he saw his avarice and cruel hardness of heart in its true light; and the thought pierced his heart that the blessing of riches had changed into a curse in his hands, because he had not understood, or wished to understand, the *power of gold* to do good.

This view of his own moral state, while afflicting him deeply, was profitable for his salvation. His pious son directed him to those passages of Scripture which pointed him to the true way of forgiveness. Martin truly turned to God, and implored His forgiveness for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. His prayer was heard, and, by God's blessing, his soul was purified in the furnace of affliction; and Martin became a better man than he had been before, and even more compassionate and kind-hearted than he had been in the days of his former poverty. His return towards good was as quick as had been his fall into evil; but he was not so happy, for the thought of poor Mary and other cases of his cruelty haunted his mind. He showed the depth of his repentance by a complete change in his conduct. He gave his son full scope for the exercise of benevolence, and permitted him to dispose freely of his money; but when he saw the happiness which Walter spread around him by wise liberality, his conscience only troubled him the more. He reproached himself that the *power of gold* in his hands had only served to make people unhappy, and bring upon himself the consciousness of guilt; while, in the hand of Walter, this very same power became a source of happiness to himself, and a blessing to all around him. Walter enjoyed the purest happiness. He possessed at length

what he had so long desired—the power of relieving the distresses of his poor neighbours. His helping hand assisted the unfortunate. He felt that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

Nevertheless he had a great cause of sorrow. He was grieved to see that his father refused to share his enjoyment, and withdrew himself more and more from the society of others. Martin now scarcely ever left his room. Sorrow and confinement produced a bad effect on his health. His cheeks were pale; his hair became white; and, notwithstanding his naturally strong constitution, he appeared to be wasting away. Walter tried in vain to cheer him; in vain he entreated him to go out with him to visit the poor, and to enjoy the happiness produced by the benefits he bestowed on them. Martin shook his head, and always replied, ‘Do as you like, Walter; spend what money you like, but leave me alone in my sadness. I cannot forget the past.’ By degrees he became weaker, and was confined to bed. Doctors were called, who could do nothing for him. One of them said that sudden and great excitement might rouse him and do him good; but how could this be produced? Such things do not always come when they are wanted.

Walter did all he could to rouse his father, but his efforts were in vain, and he seemed doomed to see him wasting away before his eyes.

One night, while all were asleep, and even the watchmen had become drowsy, a sudden burst of flame breaking through the roof of the manufactory, which was near Martin's house, illuminated with a reddish light the village, the mountain, and the forest. The wind, which was blowing violently, served to increase the fire, which, spreading from storey to storey of the building, had soon reached Martin's dwelling. Next to the house there was a store containing tuns of oil and spirituous liquors, which took fire in an instant. In the house also there were many combustible materials; so that, before any human eye had perceived the flames, before the terrible cry, *Fire! fire!* had awakened those who were sleeping, all that Martin possessed was the prey of the devouring element, to which the massive walls of the house alone opposed some resistance. At length the cry '*Fire! fire!*' resounded through the village, and was repeated on all sides. Immediately Gonthier appeared, half dressed, running from house to house through the streets, brightly lighted up by the flames, knocking at doors and windows to arouse the inmates, and repeating continually the cry of '*Fire! fire! the factory is in flames!*'

In a few minutes all were aroused. Men, women, and children rushed hastily to the scene of the conflagration; and still there was no appearance of

alarm among the inmates of the house. Martin, Walter, his mother, and their servants seemed in a death-like sleep. Gonthier rushed to the front-door, which he vainly tried to open, shaking it violently. He knocked louder and louder, calling out, 'Open, open quickly!' No one answered. He asked for a hatchet, and was preparing to break open the door, when the terrible cry, 'Stand back for your life, the roof is going to fall in,' caused him to pause. A terrible crash above his head showed him that the danger was only too real. He drew back hastily, and almost immediately a part of the roof fell in, and burning timbers came rolling down at his feet, accompanied by a shower of sparks. A thick cloud of smoke enveloped the house for a moment, and, when it was partially cleared away, all present saw to their great horror that two enormous burning rafters had fallen across the doorway, which was thus shut up, closing the only way of safe egress to the inmates of the house. A cry of horror burst from the assembled crowd.

'Bring ladders,' cried Gonthier in a voice of thunder. 'We must save them by the windows.'

Many rushed off to get ladders; meantime the terrified inmates of the house appeared at the windows calling for help.

Walter opened a window, and shouted to the crowd below: 'I entreat you to make haste. The

staircase is in flames ; we cannot get down. Help us, my brave friends. I implore you to save my father and mother !'

'Patience,' replied Gonthier. 'All that men can do shall be done. But wait for a few minutes, my dear Walter. Ah, here come the ladders !'

Ladders were brought and placed at the window, where Walter was standing, supporting his half-fainting mother. Near him his father was seated in an arm-chair, which Walter had drawn close to the window. The old man was gazing mournfully, yet tranquilly, on the tumultuous crowd and the roaring flames. Walter was preparing to assist his half-unconscious mother to get out of the window, when the cry again resounded, 'The roof! the roof!'

The strong beams which until now had supported a part of the roof began to give way. A fearful crash was heard, the remaining part of the roof falling in with terrific violence, and the rafters partly inside and partly outside the house, and the ladders were broken to pieces.

The situation of the Martins was very terrible. The rafters which had fallen inside had destroyed the ceilings, and had filled the rooms with stifling smoke and intolerable heat. The burning staircase increased the danger. The flames came nearer and nearer to the sufferers, and at length reached the doors and woodwork of the room where they were ;

and it was evident that if they did not receive immediate help, they would all perish in the burning ruins of their dwelling.

Assistance was not long in coming. There was not a person in the village who was not ready to sacrifice his life for Walter, and every heart beat with anxiety on his account. Another ladder was brought and placed under the window, notwithstanding the burning rafters, and Gonthier, rushing up as quick as thought, received from the hands of Walter his almost unconscious mother, and carrying her in his vigorous arms, he descended safely.

'Follow me!' he shouted to Walter; 'do not lose an instant! The house will soon fall in and bury you under its ruins!'

'I cannot come yet,' loudly exclaimed Walter. 'Save my father first, I implore you, dear Gonthier.'

'Let him save himself!' said Gonthier harshly, and shaking his head. 'Has *he* ever saved any one? I would give my life for *you*, kind, generous young man; but as for *him*, I would not stir a finger to save him!'

Walter turned pale. He knew that his father had not strength to escape alone from the danger, and that even his own strength would be insufficient for the purpose. Unless Gonthier or some one else would aid him with a strong arm, his father would be lost,—he would perish miserably in the flames. But his resolution was taken. He would either save

his father or die with him. Could he think for a moment of escaping from danger by forsaking his father? Never! He tried to lift him and take him on his shoulders, and thus descend the dangerous ladder with him, but he could not succeed. Martin himself saw that his son was not able for the task, and he commanded him, in a calm but decided tone, to go down alone, and leave him to his fate.

'Go, my son,' said he; 'do not sacrifice yourself for me. I am reaping the fruits of my evil deeds. I do not murmur at my fate, and I humbly submit to the Lord's will. Let Him deal with me as it seems to Him best! I have been harsh and pitiless to these men; I have no right to complain if they have no pity for me. But you, my dear son, have been always kind to them. They love you, and they wish to repay you for what you have done for them. Profit by their kindness, and save yourself.'

'No, father, no! on no account,' said Walter, folding his arms resolutely. 'If you are to die, we will die together; but I will never leave you!'

'Walter, Walter!' shouted Gonthier, 'why do you delay? The danger is increasing every instant. A few minutes more, and it will be too late. Make haste, I implore you. I fear the ladder may take fire, and it is the last we have!'

Walter shook his head, clasped his father in his arms, and called to Gonthier,—

‘I shall remain here till my father is in safety, or I will die with him!’

Gonthier muttered some angry words. He hesitated for an instant, as if he could not resolve to let Walter perish.

‘Die then, madman!’ exclaimed he at last. ‘I will not risk my life for your father!’

Meantime nothing checked the fury of the flames. Clouds of smoke and showers of fiery sparks enveloped the sufferers, who seemed doomed to certain death, and the blazing rafters which had fallen near the foot of the ladder threatened to set it on fire. Then at last Gonthier, as if from a dream, took a sudden resolution, snatched the pails of water from those who were carrying them, poured them on the half-kindled steps of the ladder, knocked aside the burning rafters, and rushed to the assistance of the unhappy sufferers. In a few moments he reached the window.

‘Come!’ cried he to Walter, who was nearly suffocated by heat and smoke; ‘I implore you to come quickly. In a few minutes more it will be too late. The whole house will be a heap of ruins.’

‘Save my father first, Gonthier, and then I will try to escape,’ replied Walter.

‘No, my son, go! escape at once. Leave me, I command you!’ said Martin, in a half-stifled tone, but with all the energy in his power. ‘I suffer

only what I deserve; but you ought to make your escape. I wish it; I command it!’

Walter did not move, and merely shook his head. It was evident that there was no time to lose. Gonthier appeared irresolute.

‘No,’ exclaimed he in a resolute tone, ‘you shall not die here, young man!’ and, taking Walter in his powerful arms, he lifted him on the window-sill.

‘Now I have you,’ said he; ‘if you struggle or resist, we shall both be thrown down and killed. I promise you that if you will go, I will make a last effort to save your father.’

Walter yielded; for the fear of dragging Gonthier down with him in his fall paralysed his efforts to resist. Gonthier took him up as he would have done a child, assisted him to descend the first few steps of the ladder, and said to him,—

‘Go now, you can make your way alone. If your father is to be saved, we must lose no time.’

Walter was soon safe on the ground. Gonthier once more ascended, took Martin on his shoulders, and, so burdened, descended the ladder with wonderful agility. Scarcely had his foot touched the ground when the whole interior of the building fell in with a crash, sending up showers of sparks in all directions. In a few minutes all that was left of the magnificent mansion and factory were blackened walls, and heaps of smoking ruins.

The workshops, the stores, the machinery, were entirely destroyed,—nothing was saved; and one night sufficed to annihilate all the large fortune which the weaver Martin had so unexpectedly acquired! Poor as he had been in former times, he went with tottering steps to his cottage in the forest, the only possession remaining to him of his great riches. He was supported on the way by his son and by Gonthier. When he entered the cottage, he threw himself on a seat, hid his face in his hands, and wept bitterly.

Walter and Gonthier tried to comfort him, but in vain; and, leaving him to the care of his wife, they returned to the neighbourhood of the fire to try to be of use in preventing it from spreading to the other houses in the village. Fortunately these were very much scattered, and generally at a distance from the manufactory, and a few well-directed efforts were sufficient to preserve them from the flames. There was no other misfortune to be feared that night. The blow had fallen on Martin alone; his prosperity seemed to be gone for ever, and no one pitied him. On the contrary, all sympathised with Walter; and yet the loss of fortune did not distress the young man. If he felt any sorrow for what had happened, it was only on account of his father, whose health was so sadly shaken that it was to be feared that he might not survive the blow.



CHAPTER VIII.

PEACE AND ATONEMENT.

'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.'—
MATT. vi. 3.

IN a fine summer evening, several years after the events related in the last chapter, the sun was shining brightly into the small sitting-room in Martin's cottage in the forest. The window was overhung with the branches of a vine which covered the wall of the cottage, and, as the bright sunbeams shone into the room, they cast waving shadows on the opposite wall. Martin was seated as of old before his loom, throwing as he used to do the swift shuttle between the threads of his web. His hair was now a silvery white; age and anxiety had furrowed his brow; but his eye was clear and serene, and a quiet smile was on his lip, showing that there was peace in his heart. He was alone in the small room, the appearance of

which was not greatly changed ; but it was now comfortably furnished, and near the fire there was a large convenient arm-chair, with cushions of dark morocco, which gave evidence of long and constant use. Order and neatness reigned, and seemed to show that Martin had not then, as formerly, to struggle with poverty.

The door opened, and Margaret, Martin's excellent wife, entered the room.

'Still at work, my poor old man?' said she in a kindly tone. 'The sun is setting, and it seems to me that you have worked enough for one day. Take a little rest ; you do not need to work now. Does not Walter work enough for us all ?'

'Let me do it, Margaret,' replied Martin, looking at her tenderly. 'I like to ply my shuttle, and to work for the poor. I have earned my half-florin well to-day, and I mean to give it to poor Valentine. He is getting old, and is not very able to work. I think this little gift will be acceptable. Go, Margaret, Walter will pay you for my day's work, and you will take the money to Valentine, will you not ?'

'But, my dear husband, why do you persist in working so constantly ?' replied Margaret. 'Think that you too are getting old, and that you have a right to rest now. Leave it all to Walter ; he is prosperous, you know, and he sees that no one

suffers want in the village. Why, then, should you weary yourself? Are you not sure of your daily bread for the rest of your life?’

Martin was thoughtful for a moment, but soon, rising from his loom, he said, smiling, ‘Come, then, I will take a rest now. Come, dear Margaret, let us go to the garden. What a fine evening it is! The flowers are smelling so sweetly, and the birds are singing their most joyful songs. Let us go and sit in the honeysuckle arbour, and talk a little about past times.’

Putting aside his shuttle, Martin was covering his work carefully with a linen cloth, when Gonthier came in.

‘Still at work, my old friend?’ said he in an abrupt but friendly tone. ‘Come, leave your loom for this evening. You should rest now. Your clever son Walter provides for everything. Work is for the young, and rest for the old.’

‘Let me alone to do as I like,’ replied Martin, imitating the hearty abruptness of his friend’s manner. ‘You come here only to scold me! Have I employed my life so well that I deserve to rest? and do you not know how much I have to do to repair my faults and to redeem the time when—when I was rich? Do you understand me?’

‘Silence, my friend!’ said Gonthier, pressing Martin’s hand, with an expressive look. ‘Do I not

know all the good that you have done since that time? Have you not become again the Martin of former days, or rather Martin a hundred times better? Now everybody loves you with all their heart, as well as your excellent wife and your good son Walter. You are a blessing to all the poor and unfortunate, and you deserve their love and gratitude. I don't want to flatter you, Martin; but I know that if you were to die, there would not be a dry eye in the village. You have done them much good,—I, old Gonthier, say so. I don't advise any one to say anything to the contrary!

'Let me work on,' replied Martin, evidently pleased with Gonthier's words; 'it is such a pleasure to me to be seated at my loom, and, as my shuttle flies to and fro, I am thinking who will be the better for my day's work. But now come with me into the wood. We can talk there at our ease, while we enjoy the fresh air on this beautiful evening.'

The three old people went out together, and sat down on a bench surrounded with verdure. For a few minutes they enjoyed in silence the pleasant sights and sounds around them,—the sweet freshness of the air, the blue sky above, purple and gold in the west with the rays of the setting sun, the buzz of the insects, the sweet smell of the flowers, and the harmonious notes of the birds in the wood.

'I've been thinking,' said Gonthier at last, 'that the evening of life ought to be like this evening—peaceful and full of love.'

'Yes, there's no doubt of that,' replied Martin; 'if it were not, in my case, the remembrance of the past, of the time when I preferred mammon to the salvation of my soul. This remembrance darkens my sky like a thick cloud, and it is that this cloud may become less gloomy that I wish to work now as long as my poor arms are able to move. Ah, my friend, I suffered much after the fire which destroyed my whole fortune! I had many painful hours at that time; but now I thank God that in His mercy He has delivered me from the snares of riches!'

'Yet you did save the fire-proof safe that contained your money,' said Gonthier. 'You remember we found it uninjured in the strong room when we had removed the ruins. You have built new premises with the money, bought new machinery, and are now giving work to many, who bless you for it. You have done more'—

'Don't say I did it,' said Martin, interrupting him; 'it was not I, but my clever son Walter. He does not wish this to be known, good son as he is. He wished it all to be done in my name, that I might have all the credit of it, but I have been long enough silent to gratify him. It is time now that

you should know the truth, and you may tell it to whom you please. You must know, then'—

'Enough! father,' suddenly exclaimed a clear, cheerful voice. 'Enough! or I will tell in my turn all you have been doing.'

Walter then appeared. He was now a strong and handsome young man. He shook hands with his father and mother and with Gonthier, and added,—

'Let us change the subject, father. Not a word more about it, if you please.'

'No, no!' replied his father. 'The ice is broken, and I must now say all that I have had so long upon my mind. You must know then, Gonthier, that after the fire, in which I thought I had lost all, and when I thought myself poorer than I had ever been before, because I had not even the love of my good neighbours, I was enabled to say with resignation, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord!" Before the fire took place, the death of poor Mary, Valentine's daughter, had made a painful impression upon me. I took no pleasure in my riches, and I thought only of the sin which my love of money had caused me to commit. I felt that I had made a bad use of the wealth that God had given me. I felt that I had not used the "*power of gold*" as it is the will of God that it should be used. I could not help constantly thinking of the words you once said to me,

“Gold hardens the heart,”—words which had been so truly fulfilled in my case. My heart was overwhelmed with grief, shame, and repentance. I could enjoy nothing after God had opened my eyes to see my excessive avarice and my inhuman cruelty. Then came the fire. I thought I had lost everything; and after the first painful effects of the blow had in some degree passed away, I began to take a right view of the matter. I said to myself, “This is a chastisement sent to you by God for your perversity. He inflicts on you the punishment which your sins have richly deserved.” After this I soon became resigned, and by degrees even contented in my little cottage; my heart was lighter, as if relieved from some heavy weight. I submitted to my punishment. I even received it with a kind of joy, and I ceased to regret the loss of my riches. I regretted far more the loss of the good-will and sympathy of my neighbours, and I resolved to shrink from no humiliation and no efforts to recover what I now prized so much. I saw that humility and a change of conduct must be the fruits of my repentance. Such were my feelings, when one day Walter, rushing in quite out of breath, told me that the safe containing my money had been dug out uninjured from the ruins. I knew that there was a very large sum in it; but this news, instead of giving me unmixed pleasure, almost made me fear for myself. I could

not receive again, without trembling, the fortune which I had so ardently desired, and which I had even preferred to the salvation of my own soul. I felt that I had need of watchfulness and prayer; and, after having implored God's help, my resolution was soon taken. I said to Walter, "I give you all this money; it belongs to you alone; I will not touch it. All that I shall ask is, that you will give me what is absolutely necessary to support your mother and me. Dispose of the rest as you please; I know that you will use it well." Walter refused at first to yield to my wish, and at length he consented only on condition that everything should be done in my name. I understood his feelings. My dear son wished that I should recover the good opinion of my neighbours, and that I should regain their confidence and their love. He wished that I, a poor sinner, should have all the credit of the good which was to be done by him. I yielded to his earnest entreaty, feeling pleasure in his true affection for me, but shame on my own account, for I did feel ashamed at the thought of depriving him of the praise which I knew his benevolence would deserve; and I often had cause to blush for this, till now I can conceal the truth no longer. You see, Gonthier, that the people have to thank Walter and not me for all the good which has been done in this place since the time of the fire. It is he who

has rebuilt the factory, given work and bread to the work-people, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and given assistance wherever there was misery to be relieved. To all this I have given nothing but my name; and all the gratitude I have received was justly due to Walter. Keep then for him the praises which I have not deserved. I am merely the nominal, but it is my worthy son who is the real benefactor.'

Gonthier was deeply moved. His eyes, beaming with joy, were fixed sometimes on Walter and sometimes on his old friend. He took them both by the hand and said,—

'Martin, your conduct is noble and good. You have conquered yourself twice,—first by overcoming your avarice, and then by making the confession which I have just heard. Allow me to tell you, that although Walter may have really done all that you appeared to have done, you nevertheless deserve the love and gratitude of all those whom he has assisted; for Walter could not have accomplished what he has, unless you had furnished him with the means. Do not, therefore, refuse to accept your own share of the gratitude which is due, and may you be richly rewarded for your noble self-denial!'

'In addition to this, Gonthier,' said Walter, with tears in his eyes, 'there is more which my good father has not told you. Ever since the fire he has

been working from morning to night, and whatever he earns by his work is wholly given to assist the unfortunate. He contents himself with what is strictly necessary for his support, and my mother takes his earnings to the sick and the poor, and gives the money in my name. Father, I have been silent till now, according to your orders; but, since you have told my secret, I do not consider myself bound to keep yours. So now, Gonthier, you know all.'

'Was it not necessary that I should earn something, however little,' said the good old man, with a pleasant smile, 'that I might not blush for receiving praises which my son alone deserved? Don't mention all this to any one. You understand, Gonthier? Let me go on with my humble work in peace. It gives me pleasure; and I think that in this way I may be able to show in some degree the gratitude I owe to God for His gracious love and mercy, and prove my repentance for the bad use I formerly made of the wealth which He bestowed on me.'

Honest Gonthier was so affected that he could not utter a word, but he shook hands heartily with his old friend. All at once the sound of singing was heard in the wood at some distance, as if from a number of persons passing along. As they approached nearer, the words of the hymn they were

singing could be distinctly heard, borne to Martin and his companions by the evening breeze. The singers seemed to linger for a time in the wood at no great distance, and they sang a well-known hymn:—

‘Lord, shall we part with gold for dross,
With solid good for show ;
Outlive our bliss, and mourn our loss
In everlasting woe ?

‘Let us not lose the living God
For one short dream of joy ;
With fond embrace cling to a clod,
And fling all heaven away.

‘Vain world, thy weak attempts forbear,
We all thy charms defy,
And rate our precious souls too dear
For all thy wealth to buy.’

The singing became more and more faint as the party proceeded on their way, till the last notes of the hymn seemed to melt away in the air.

The words had touched the hearts of the listeners.

‘You have endeavoured to show how much you owe to our Lord,’ said Gonthier, addressing Martin and Walter. ‘Our heavenly Master has entrusted

to you the "*power of gold*," and, like faithful servants, you have used well the talent He has committed to you.'

Walter was silent; and Martin, raising his eyes to heaven, said solemnly,—

'I pray that God in His great mercy may forgive my sins, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake. If He had not in His goodness touched my heart and guided my steps, I would never have dared to lift up my eyes towards Him.'

The little group remained in the garden till the coolness of the night obliged them to return to the cottage, and there the conversation was carried on. The subject was the '*power of gold*,' and the dangers and the heavy responsibility of those to whom this gift is entrusted. Walter had learned from his father's misfortunes a lesson which he never forgot. Riches in his hands continued to be a constant blessing to all in the village, and he was loved and blessed by the whole neighbourhood. He prized this love as his most precious possession; he cherished it in his heart, and he enjoyed it as a blessing bestowed on him by God.

Rich men, who have at your disposal the '*power of gold*,' go and do likewise.



CONTENTMENT.

A TRUE STORY.



'Godliness with contentment is great gain.'—1 TIM. vi. 6.

THE following story is written from the diary of a Bible colporteur in France. These men, in summer and winter, in cold and heat, through suffering and discouragement, in labour and weariness, are constantly occupied in circulating the word of God, and so obeying the command of their divine Master.

Some time ago a Bible colporteur, travelling in a remote district on the edge of a forest, came near a miserable cottage, the door of which was open, and he heard these words uttered in a loud voice: 'We thank Thee, O Lord, for all the blessings Thou bestowest upon us.'

The colporteur did not wish to disturb their

prayers, and, standing still quietly, he was much delighted to hear that those in the cottage were praising the Lord for His infinite mercy, which He had shown by manifesting Himself in all His goodness to the hearts which were at that moment overflowing with gratitude towards Him. When the prayer was over, the colporteur, who was now certain that he would find himself among friends, did not hesitate to cross the threshold of the open door. One glance around showed him that in this miserable dwelling there were not only the privations of poverty, but the still more terrible suffering that one of those living there had lost his sight. The little room was so damp that the water was dropping from the roof on the wet floor. A bed, a small table, and a few wooden chairs, were all the furniture of this poor dwelling; but it was still more sad to look at the two poor people who inhabited it,—a blind old man seated beside his wife, who was nearly as old as he was, and who was confined to her bed, and unable to move because of an attack of paralysis. In a worldly point of view nothing could be more heart-rending to contemplate than the scene in this cottage; yet it was these poor people who had uttered the prayer heard by the colporteur.

‘May the peace of God abide with you, my dear friends,’ said he as he entered; ‘and may all the

consolations of His Holy Spirit be bestowed upon you!' At these words the old man rose, took off the cap which he wore on his head, and turning towards the voice of the stranger, whom he could not see, he replied, 'Welcome, my brother, to our poor home,—my brother, I say, because your salutation proves to me that you serve the Lord, as we also do.'

A few Christian words interchanged between the two soon made them intimate with each other, and in the course of conversation the colporteur learned the following story:—

It would be difficult to describe a more desolate and poverty-stricken life than that of the two old people of whom we are speaking; and their want of all comfort must have been grievously felt by them, since at one time they had seen better days. But it was a singular thing that during their prosperity they were never contented. The money which they received from their abundant harvests, and hoarded in their money-chest, never seemed to them to be enough; and as the love they bore to their hoards induced them to spend as little as possible, it often happened that, notwithstanding the heaps of money they possessed, they still denied themselves the most necessary things. In their case the words of the gospel were literally fulfilled: 'Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the

things which he possesseth.'¹ Of course this is true about the life to come, but it is also literally true of life amid terrestrial enjoyment. There was plenty of wealth in the household of which we speak, and yet they had scarcely sufficient food, for they hoarded all that they could.

But one day—a day which they ever deplored—the bribe of great profit made them depart from their usual custom of locking up in a safe the sums of money which they possessed. Tempted by the brilliant promises of a skilful cheat, they trusted to him the gold and silver which they had so long hoarded up, and in a very short time they perceived the snare into which they had fallen. It would be utterly impossible to describe their despair.

'There are no words to say what I have suffered,' said the old man to the colporteur. 'I wept continually, and it is to these tears that I attribute the loss of my sight. Ah, dear friend, the bitter tears that I shed for days and days, and nights and nights, have destroyed my poor eyes. As to my sickly wife, from the time when she heard how we had been robbed, and that our last farthing was taken from us, all at once she was so struck by the tidings that she fell on the ground as if stiff and dead. They lifted her up, supposing her dead, and it was many days before she recovered consciousness suf-

¹ Luke xii. 15.

ficient to speak ; but she has never since recovered the use of her limbs. She is now lying on this bed paralysed, and unable to move, as you see.'

'Certainly, my good friends,' said the colporteur, 'you have suffered very much ; but I thank God that He has taught you that He only chastises His children for their own good, to make them partakers of His holiness.'

'Yes, praise to His name a thousand and a thousand-fold !' replied the old man. 'And now hear how it has been His will to teach us. It would be a long story to tell how hard in heart and understanding we were, and how little we cared for better things. Alas ! when we were obliged to sell our beautiful farm, our cows, our sheep, and all that we possessed, in order to pay what we owed ; when afterwards we took refuge in this miserable place, we at first uttered murmurs, and blasphemed. When, a year afterwards, I became quite blind ; when I could do nothing to earn my own living or that of my poor paralysed wife ; when at last we became chargeable to the parish, I was in such despair that I even wished for death.

'One day that we were both lamenting our fate with more bitterness even than usual, a merchant travelling on foot, and carrying all his merchandise on his back, opened our door to ask us to buy a book, the name of which he told us, but I did not

attend to what he said. Such an offer addressed to a blind man and a paralytic woman, almost dying of hunger, appeared to me to be a mockery, almost an insult. I spoke to him rudely, and still more insolently when he told me that he wished me to buy a religious book. Yet he did not appear intimidated; and in gentle tones, which, to tell the truth, helped to appease my anger, he said to me, "Ah, my poor friend, if you knew what a treasure of consolation I am offering to you, you would not treat me as you do. Permit me to read to you a few passages from my book. I am sure that if you will but listen to them, they will comfort your poor heart."

'He then read to us, from the book he held in his hand, several passages to this purpose: that God does not afflict men willingly; that when He chastises He pities them; that when He sends them grievous sufferings it is only to wean them from the evil things of this world; and that in the end it will be found to be true what the word of God says, that "All things work together for good to them who love God."¹

'My wife and I listened to the good man with much surprise. No one had ever spoken to us before; never had such things reached our ears. Then the merchant, so unlike any merchant we had seen before, asked permission to pray with us. He

¹ Rom. viii. 28.

knelt down at my wife's bedside, and prayed in such an earnest and tender manner, that it almost makes me weep to remember it even now. He besought the Lord to comfort us and to do us good; and certainly we felt much moved, and we thanked him for his prayer with all our hearts. After having spent some time with us, when the night was coming on, the good man bade us farewell, saying, "My dear friends, I regret that my duty obliges me to go away from you this evening, and perhaps I may never be permitted to return; but wherever I may go I will think of you, and I will pray for you. For my own part I do not possess much of the wealth of this world, yet I can give you what is incomparably more precious than the gold and silver you have lost,—that is, the word of God, the book from which I have just read to you. One of you can read it to the other. Do this, my dear friends; and when you do so, pray to God sincerely, as children speak to their father, and ask Him to teach you to understand what He says; and I assure you that very soon you will not only be comforted but joyful. This book, my good friends, will teach you, what you do not seem yet to know, that God so loves you that He gave His only Son to save you. You will learn all this in the gospel, which will show you all that our Lord Jesus Christ has done to redeem your souls from sin and eternal punishment."

‘So saying, the stranger placed the volume on the table near the poor woman, at the same time slipping under it a two-shilling piece. Then he disappeared, and since then we have heard nothing more of him, though it is about two years since he visited us.’

‘But you followed his counsel, did you not?’ said the colporteur.

‘Yes, doubtless!’ said the old man. ‘At first we followed it very awkwardly, not knowing what to do. We could not read very well, and we did not know how to pray.’

‘For a long time I had forgotten the prayers which I had been taught in my childhood, and all that I could sincerely say was this: “O Lord, we wish to pray to Thee, and we do not know how. Help us!” At last, one day, my wife read to me the following passage from the gospel: “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”¹ “Ah, that is our prayer!” exclaimed I; “we also are sinners, and great sinners.” You understand, dear sir, that while we acknowledged ourselves to be such, we thought only of the Saviour of sinners. My wife read and read over again the gospels, both for her own sake and mine; and this was done so often,

¹ Luke xviii. 13.

that although my eyes are closed to the light of day, I could quote numerous passages from memory, all well fitted to strengthen and comfort our hearts.

‘During this time also the Lord did a work within us much better than our own. He gave us His Holy Spirit, and I say this without any vain-glorious boasting. It was His will that we should believe on Him; that we should glorify Him in His Son. He taught us to believe in His free love; to look to Him and to love Him as our Father. The following are words of the Lord, which I repeat with much gratitude, and which are also the greatest comfort of my dear wife: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”¹

‘What shall I say more?’ added the blind man. ‘What unbelievers could not understand, but what you as a believer must admit to be true, is that now with the peace of God in our hearts we are so happy, so perfectly happy, that we would not exchange what you think our poor and miserable condition for all the treasures of this world. Yes, dear sir, we say very humbly, but most sincerely, with the Apostle Paul, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.”²

¹ John v. 24.

² 1 Tim. vi. 6.



COMFORT IN AFFLICTION.

A TRUE STORY.



‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’—*MATT. xi. 28.*

IN a country road, on one of the coldest days of winter, a man might have been seen dressed in a blouse, and bending under the weight of a knapsack filled with the holy books. He was a Bible colporteur, who was going to the most solitary houses in remote parts of the country, to offer them the word of God. Neither rudeness nor indifference discourages him. ‘In season and out of season,’ as the apostle says, he tries to win souls to the Lord, and his labours are often blessed.

A New Testament had been sold by a colporteur to a country farmer, who had bought it because a

great deal had been said to him about the value of the book ; but his interest in it did not last long. When reading it, he came to some verses which condemned sins which he knew that he was in the habit of committing. Forced by his conscience to admit that he himself was condemned, he shut the book angrily, threw it into a closet, and soon forgot it entirely. Long afterwards a little girl, one of the farmer's children, looking into the closet for waste-paper, found the book, and seeing it among the rubbish, she used its pages for cutting out figures on paper. One day she went to visit a friend who had been ill for many years, and was constantly confined to bed. To amuse this friend, she took her scissors and a few pages of the book from which she had been tearing out the leaves. She put one of these leaves, which she intended to cut, on the bed of the invalid, who took it up, and her eye glanced upon the very words of the text put at the beginning of this story.

'What are you doing, Louisa?' said she, addressing her little visitor; 'do you not see that you are destroying a religious book, and that is a very wrong thing to do?' Louisa explained that she had found the book thrown away among rubbish and old papers. At her friend's request she gave her the pages she had brought.

When Louisa was gone, the invalid again read

two pages were sufficient to fill her heart with peace and love to the Saviour. One day a Bible colporteur visited her house, and she was enabled to get the whole of the Scriptures. She was so rejoiced to get them, that she scarcely seemed to feel the self-denial she was obliged to exercise, by depriving herself for several days almost of necessaries, in order to repay the sum which she was obliged to borrow in order to purchase them. The neighbours of the poor invalid soon remarked that an astonishing change had taken place on her. They inquired the cause; and when it was known, many came to converse with her, some out of curiosity, and others from a better motive. Among these visitors there were many poor afflicted ones who listened eagerly to the words of the woman, and imitated her example by going to Him, who also invited them in the consoling words of Scripture, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matt. xi. 28).



